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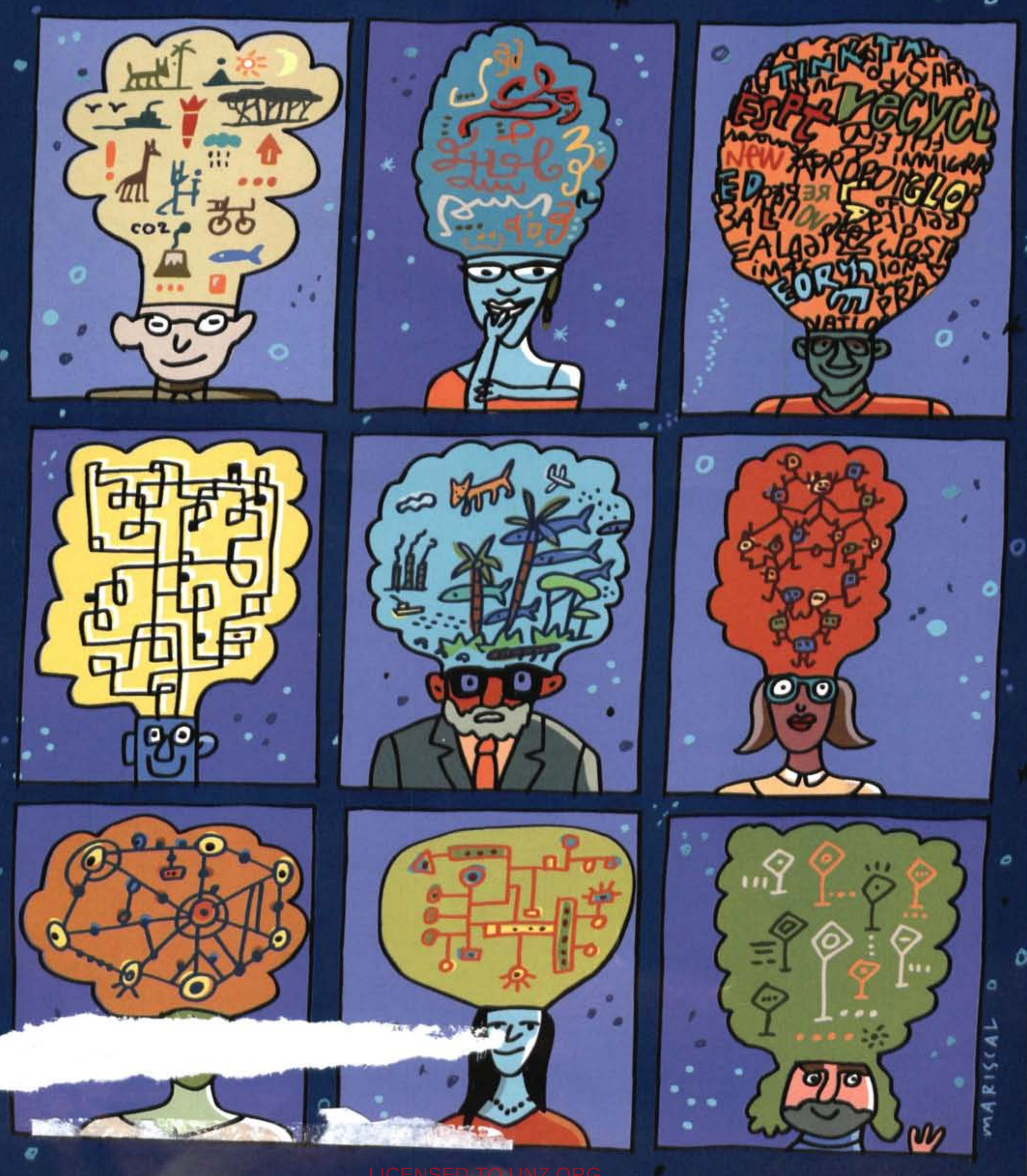
THE NEW YORKER

DEC. 21 & 28, 2009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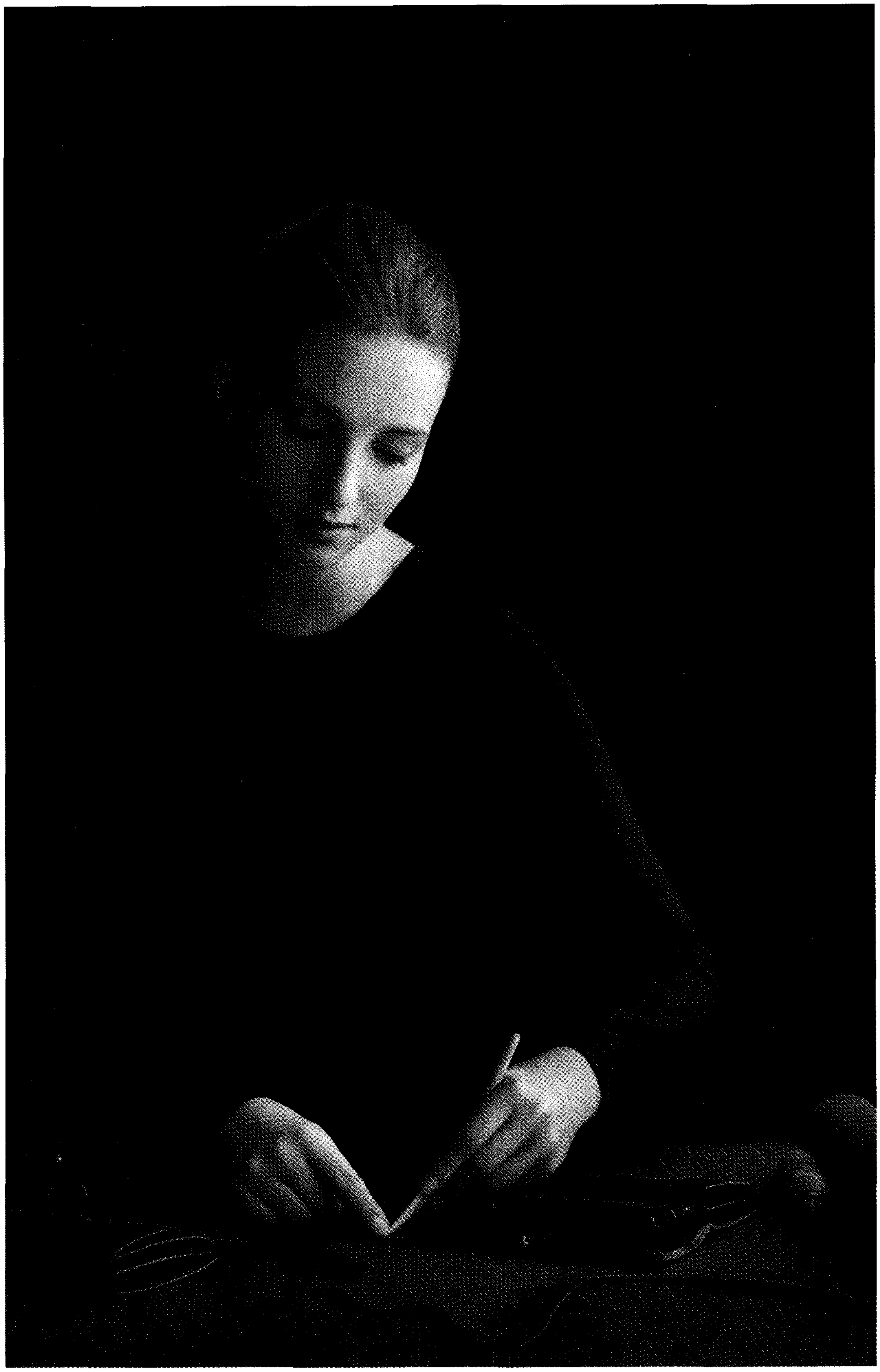

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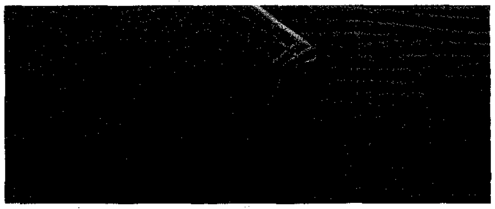

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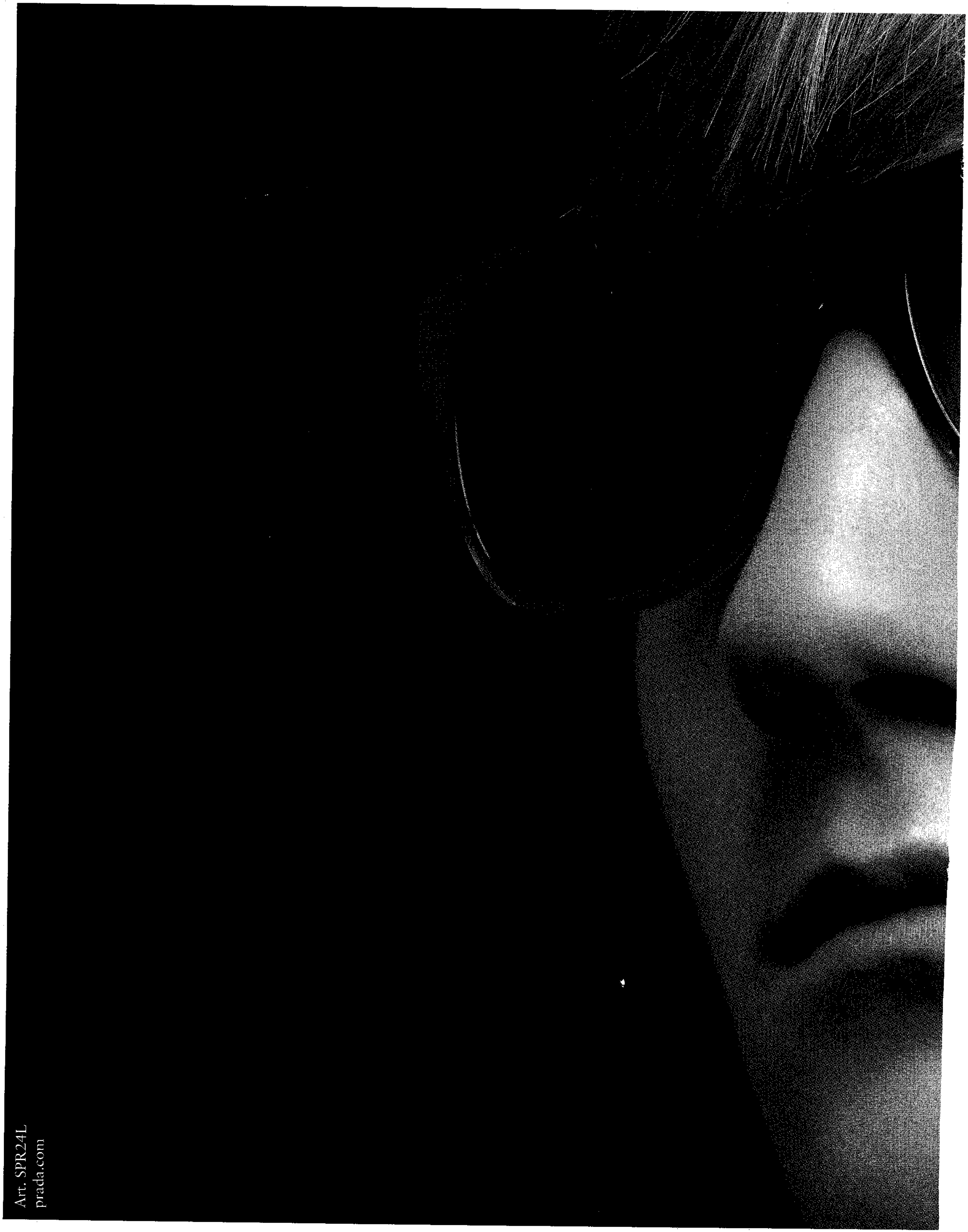
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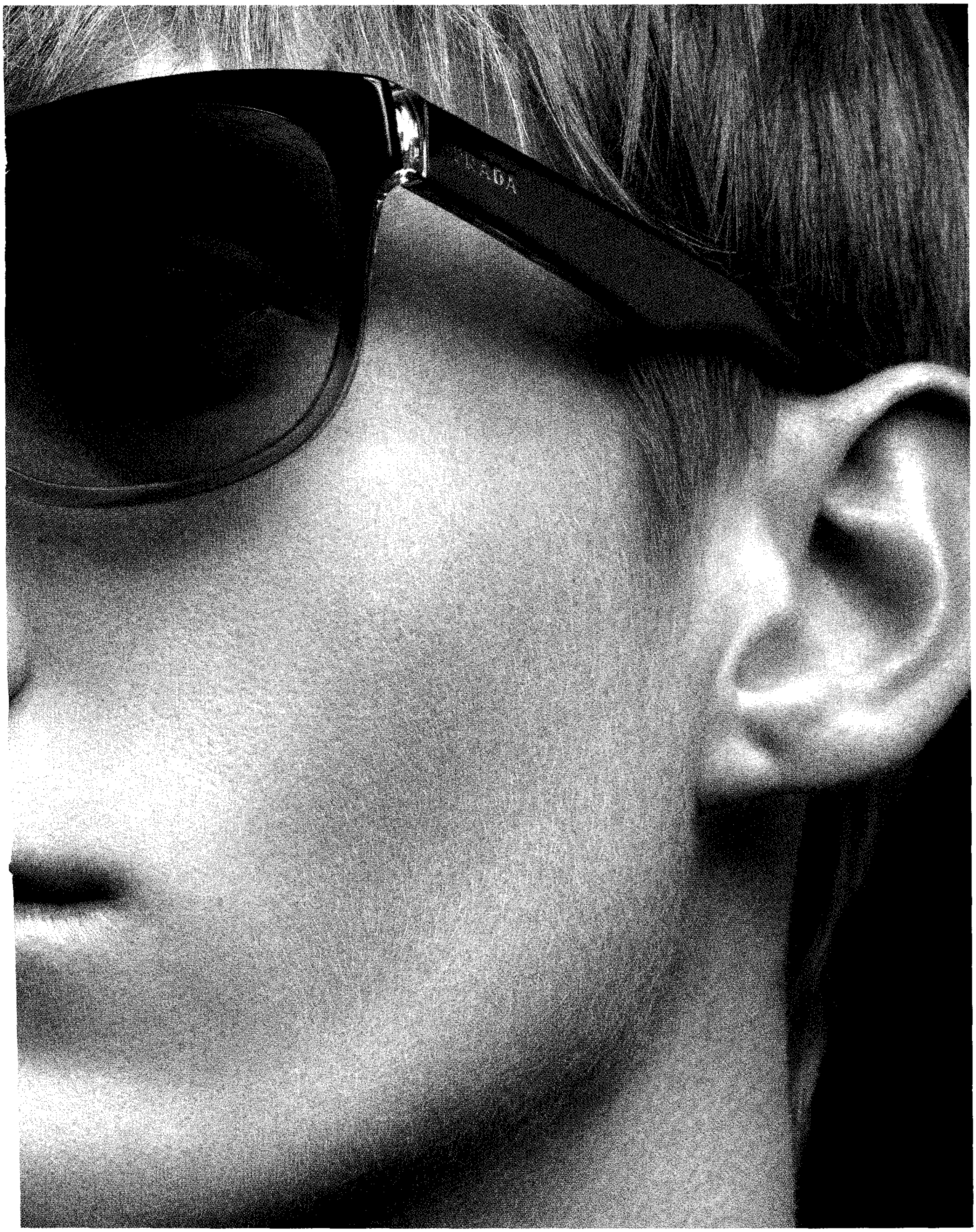

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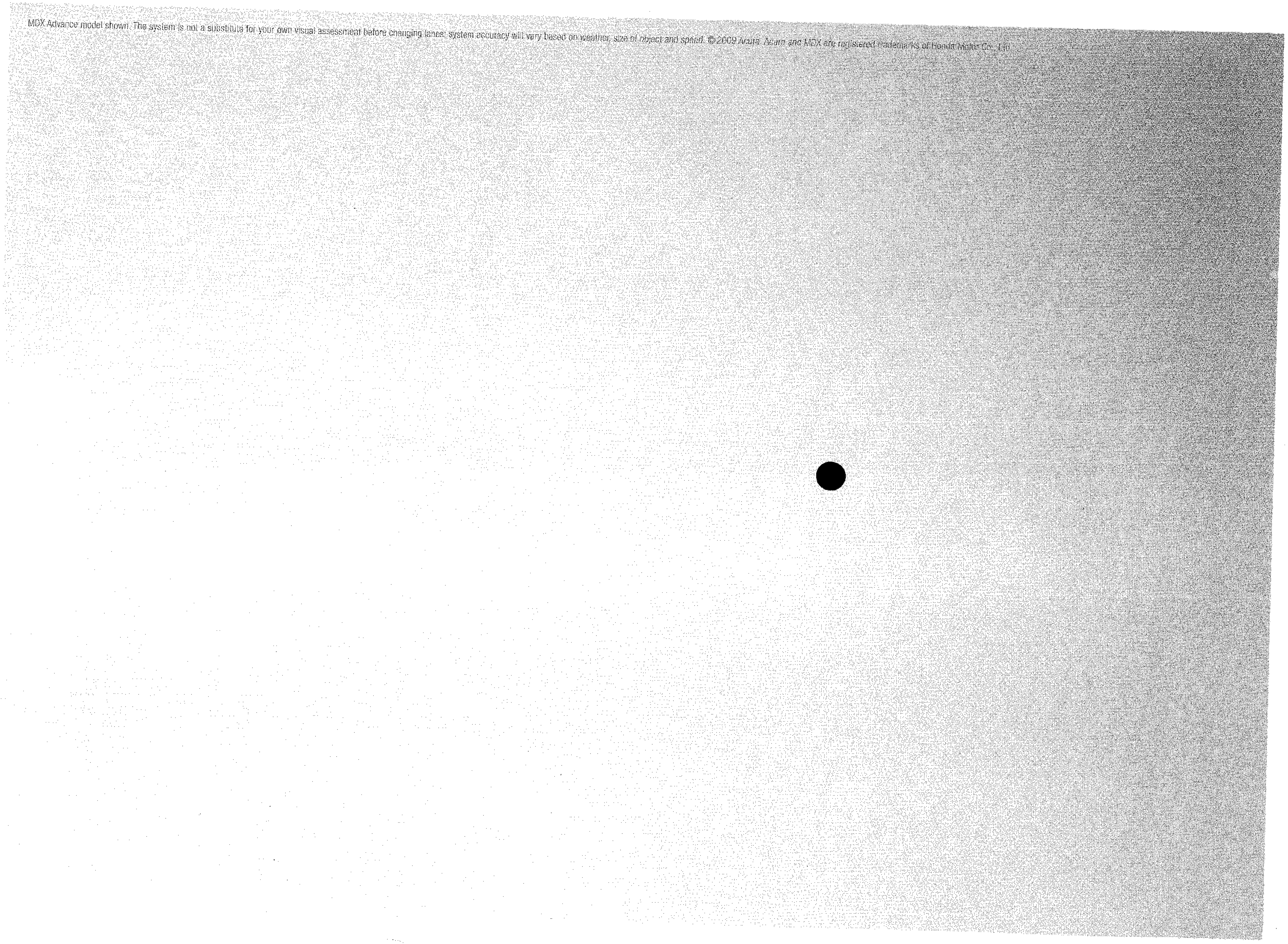

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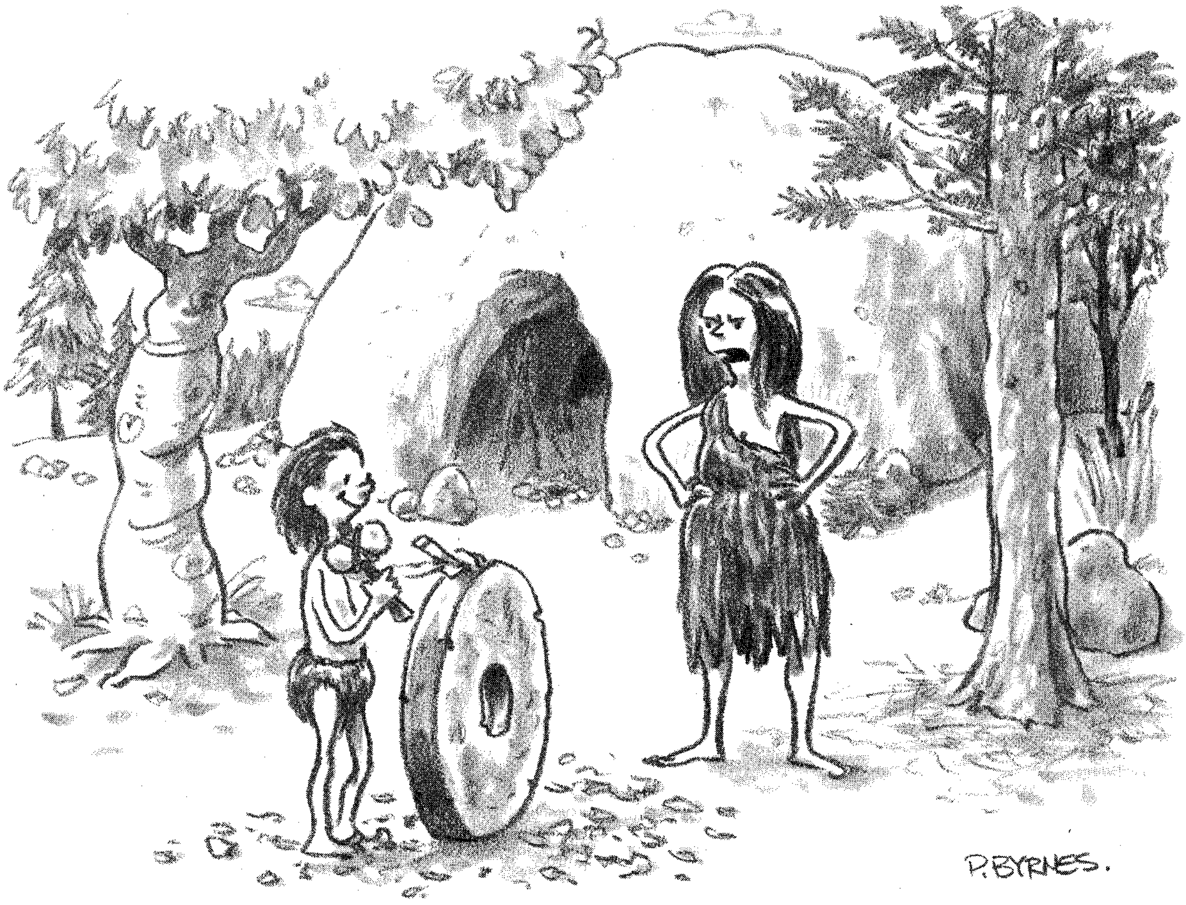

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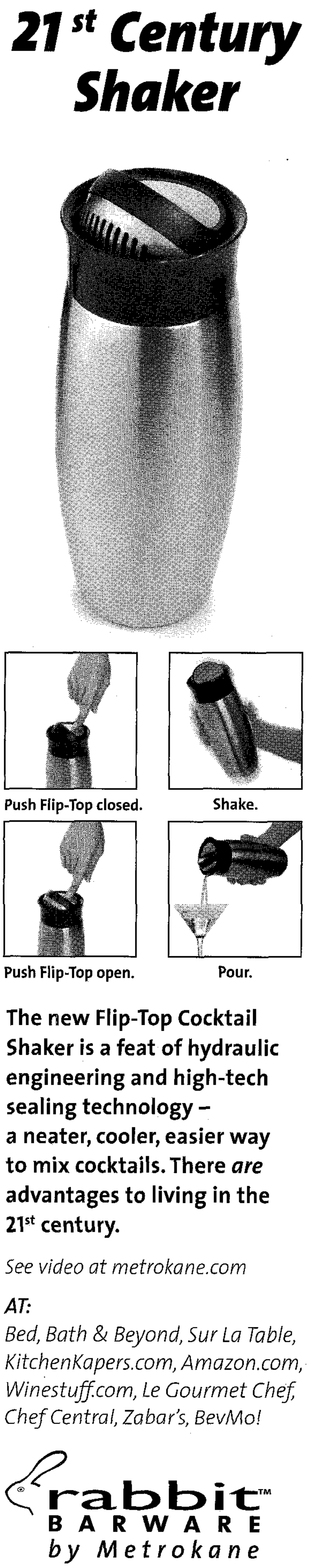

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CONTRIBUTORS

Evan Osnos ("Green Giant," p. 54) reports from China for the magazine, and writes the blog Letter from China, on newyorker.com.

George Packer (Comment, p. 45), a staff writer, has just published "Interesting Times: Writings from a Turbulent Decade."

Ian Frazier (The Talk of the Town, p. 50) won the 2009 Thurber Prize for his book "Lamentations of the Father."

Paul Rudnick (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 70) is the author of "I Shudder: And Other Reactions to Life, Death, and New Jersey," a collection of stories and essays, which came out in September.

Fen Montaigne ("The Ice Retreat," p. 72), a senior editor of the Web magazine *Yale Environment 360*, is at work on a book about the warming of the Antarctic Peninsula.

Burkhard Bilger ("Hearth Surgery," p. 84) has been a staff writer since 2001.

Bill Manhire (Poem, p. 76) directs the creative-writing program at Victoria University of Wellington, in New Zealand. His new collection of poems, "The Victims of Lightning," will be published in March.

Philip Gourevitch ("The Monkey and the Fish," p. 98) has written three books, including "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda."

John Seabrook ("The Abstractionist," p. 112) is a staff writer. His books include "Flash of Genius: And Other True Stories of Invention."

Helen Simpson (Fiction, p. 126) has a new short-story collection, "In-Flight Entertainment," coming out in the United Kingdom in May.

Jonathan Aaron (Poem, p. 130) is the author of the poetry collection "Journey to the Lost City."

Javier Mariscal (Cover) recently published a book of his work, "Drawing Life."

Louis Menand (A Critic at Large, p. 132) is a professor of English at Harvard. His new book, "The Marketplace of Ideas," comes out in January.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 146) won the 2008 Clark Prize for Excellence in Arts Writing. "Let's See: Writings on Art from *The New Yorker*" is his most recent book.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Evan Osnos chats live with readers, plus video from his e-bike in Beijing. / More multimedia: *Fen Montaigne* on penguins; *John Seabrook* on Zaha Hadid; *Burkhard Bilger* at Stove Camp; *Paul Rudnick* on interfaith holiday etiquette. / Audio: The environmental economist Robert Stavins discusses Copenhagen with *Evan Osnos* and *Dorothy Wickenden; Junot Díaz* reads an Edwidge Danticat story. / Blogs: The year and the decade in review. / Our annual Eustace Tilley cover contest. / Create a drag-and-drop desert-island cartoon. / A complete archive of issues, back to 1925.

THE MAIL

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Elizabeth Kolbert's critique of the "SuperFreakonomics" dismissal of carbon-reduction efforts is very effective and welcome (Books, November 16th). What's interesting is that what she calls the Parable of Horseshit, which is used by the authors, Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, is actually analogous to the course of action they seek to invalidate. Their proposal that we use other means to counter the effects of continued CO_2 emissions would correspond to New York's continuing to use horse-drawn transportation and countering the impact of the manure with some kind of immense waste-treatment system or perhaps by installing municipal-scale air fresheners. New York sensibly addressed the source of the problem, virtually eliminating horseshit in the city, by making use of emerging technologies.

Edward Kuharski
Madison, Wis.

THE RIGHT TO DIE

Jill Lepore, in recalling the fury that was stirred up by efforts to remove a comatose Karen Ann Quinlan from a respirator thirty-four years ago and tracing its links to current fears of health-care rationing, brings home the limits of rational argument when life-and-death issues become the centerpiece of national politics ("The Politics of Death," November 30th). But nowhere does she tell us who paid the bills for Quinlan's decadelong hospitalization and nursing-home care. As Lepore points out, end-of-life care constitutes a vast proportion of annual medical expenditures, but the generalized failure to confront the implications of real costs on moral grounds is an invitation to posturing, or even demagoguery. As with the heavy price of maintaining capital punishment, our society seems incapable of coming to terms with the relationship between money and morality.

Michael Meltsner
Professor of Law
Northeastern University School of Law
Boston, Mass.

As the author of "Classic Cases in Medical Ethics," which covers the same cases that Lepore cites, I draw different conclusions. Critics such as Nat Hentoff rightly complained that the courts should have begun by defining the rights of competent patients to die, not incompetent patients without advance directives. Quinlan was the wrong place to start. Lepore correctly describes how alarmist rhetoric, whether by Ralph Porzio in the Quinlan hearing or by Paul Ramsey in decrying test-tube babies, stymies debate and hurts real people. But it should be noted that Karen Quinlan died after her parents declined to have antibiotics administered for an infection; otherwise, Karen, a young girl, might have lived another fifty years. (Rita Greene, a twenty-four-year-old nurse, went into a persistent vegetative state in 1951 and lived until 1999.)

Gregory Pence
Professor of Philosophy
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Birmingham, Ala.

KITCHEN PLEASURES

The promise of a cookbook was first revealed to me as a child, when "Betty Crocker's Cook Book for Boys and Girls" landed in my hands (A Critic at Large, by Adam Gopnik, November 23rd). By studying the appealing pictures, I realized that cooking was actually alchemy—the transformation of reality and emotional experience through the substances of food and drink. But perhaps my becoming a scientist, like Gopnik's mother, helped me to have a feel for the unseen potential and the confidence to engage fearlessly in a process that might not turn out exactly the way you expected.

Katherine Bonson
Silver Spring, Md.

•

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the bauhaus group

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nicholas fox weber
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The Children's Gingerbread Workshop, at the James Beard House. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
HOT STUFF

The Miami-based, Havana-born singer Albita has been called the "Cuban Madonna," and it's not just because she's a pop sensation who has topped the charts several times in her long career. Just as the Material Girl has continued to reinvent herself and to flourish while doing it, Albita has conquered a number of musical forms, from *son* to Latin jazz. She brings her band to S.O.B.'s to celebrate the holidays, tropical style. (See page 21.)

DANCE
CONVERGING RIVERS

Andréya Ouamba is a Senegal-based choreographer almost unknown here. Reggie Wilson is a Brooklyn-based choreographer with roots in Milwaukee and Mississippi who's not as well known as he should be. "The Good Dance—Dakar/Brooklyn," at BAM, explores the territory between their ancestries. (See page 27.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SILENT NIGHT

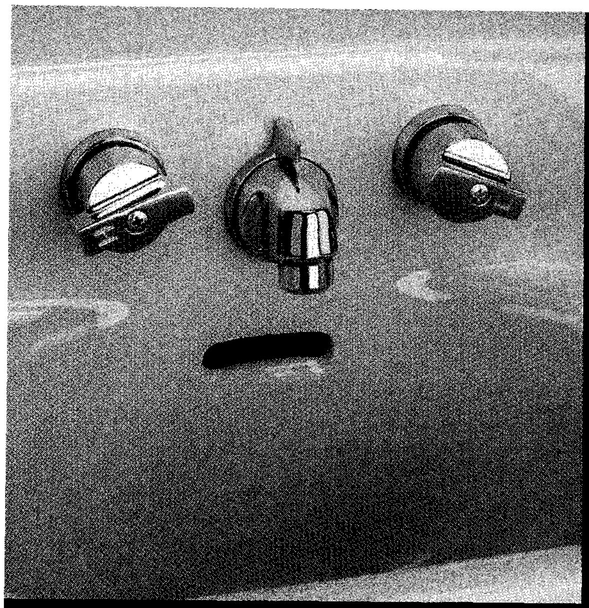
Such groups as the New York Philharmonic and Musica Sacra are offering performances of "Messiah" this month, but Bargemusic provides a quiet alternative to such grand fare: the pianist Steven Beck, who will play Bach's Goldberg Variations on Christmas Eve. (See page 28.)

MOVIES
SNOW JOB

Howard Hawks's legendary verbal whirlwind "His Girl Friday," starring Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell, blows into BAM for a whole week. The only thing it has to do with the holiday season is that it, itself, is worthy of a celebration all its own, and, at a time of year when few new revival series are getting under way, it's a spectacular series of comic calamities unto itself. (See page 40.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
SWEET TREATS

The Cookie Takedown, a competitive home-baking event held at the Bell House, in Brooklyn, helps reinforce the holiday mood by offering more than thirty types of cookies for sampling, as well as eggnog and other festive spirits. (See page 42.)



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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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THE EMPEROR JONES
The Irish Rep production of Eugene O'Neill's drama, directed by Ciaran O'Reilly, moves to SoHo Playhouse. In previews. Opens Dec. 22. (15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

ERNEST IN LOVE
Charlotte Moore directs a musical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Ernest," with a book and lyrics by Anne Croswell and music by Lee Pockriss. In previews. Opens Dec. 20. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE: PART 2
Horton Foote's three-part play cycle continues with the second installment, in repertory with Part 1, produced by Signature Theatre Company and Hartford Stage. Michael Wilson directs. In previews. Opens Dec. 17. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-352-3101.)

ROMEO AND JULIET
Nature Theatre of Oklahoma presents this meditation on the Shakespeare play, derived from phone calls to several people who were asked to tell the story of "Romeo and Juliet." Conceived and directed by Pavol Liska and Kelly Copper. Previews begin Dec. 17. Opens Dec. 19. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

SIMON GREEN TRAVELING LIGHT
Simon Green performs a holiday cabaret show, with musical accompaniment by David Shrubsole, as part of "Brits Off Broadway." In previews. Opens Dec. 20. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

BRIEF ENCOUNTER
Cornwall's Kneehigh Theatre brings its dizzily inventive staging of David Lean's 1946 film, based on Noël Coward's play "Still Life," to St. Ann's Warehouse. A British housewife (Hannah Yelland) and a handsome doctor (Tristan Sturrock) meet at a train station and dive into a bittersweet affair—one that is less about sex than about love and liberation. Using every bit of stagecraft at her disposal, the director, Emma Rice, doesn't so much deconstruct the original source as layer it with tactile pleasures. On occasion, actors teleport into a black-and-white screen, or erupt into rollicking love songs. And, in moments of suppressed passion, projections of ocean waves wash over the two lovers. The result is a high-tech study in heartache. (38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

THE GREAT RECESSION
The Flea presents ten-minute plays by Thomas Bradshaw, Sheila Callaghan, Erin Courtney, Will Eno, Itamar Moses, and Adam Rapp. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER
When Carson McCullers published her first book, in 1940, she was twenty-four years old. The novel, from which this play is adapted, caused a sensation. McCullers's story begins with scenes in the lives of two deaf men living in a small, dusty Southern town. Of the two, John Singer is the more well-adjusted and reasonable. But when his friend is taken to a mental hospital, Singer is consumed by grief—he needs to be needed. And he finds those needs partly met when he rents a room from the hard-up Kellys. There, Singer becomes a kind of father confessor to characters ranging from the Kellys' adolescent daughter, Mick, to an embittered black doctor named Copeland. In Rebecca Gilman's adaptation, dryly directed by Doug Hughes, McCullers's deep spiritual awareness of loss and the aftereffects of grief and thwarted love are routinely handled; it's difficult to see how any of the characters are transformed by the Depression-era world they inhabit. Instead, Hughes and Gilman have created a neat narrative about the disenfranchised without getting down and dirty enough to know what life is like in the margins. As a result, the actors turn out dull, lacklustre performances that squelch the inner drama of their characters' lives, which, in her novel, McCullers offers the reader like so many strange and interesting oddly shaped jewels. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through Dec. 20.)

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC
Catherine Zeta-Jones, Angela Lansbury, and Alexander Hanson star in Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler's musical, based on Ingmar Bergman's "Smiles of a Summer Night," a romantic comedy revolving around the affairs of an actress at a Swedish country house. Trevor Nunn directs. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST
Dominic Dromgoole directs the Shakespeare's Globe production. (Michael Schimmel Center at Pace University, 3 Spruce St. 212-868-4444. Through Dec. 21.)

MISALLIANCE
Jeff Steitzer directs the Pearl's production of George Bernard Shaw's 1909 comedy of manners, set on the English country estate of a newly wealthy underwear tycoon. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ORPHEUS X
Orpheus (Rinde Eckert, who also wrote the play), a world-famous rock musician, refuses to leave his recording studio; sometime before, he had been riding in a cab when the driver hit a poet, Eurydice (Suzan Hanson), who then died in Orpheus' arms. Now Orpheus can't get her out of his mind. Meanwhile, Eurydice is in Hades, frantically writing on any surface she can find with a large piece of chalk, obviously upset about being separated from her pens and paper. Persephone (John Kelly) assures the poet that she'll soon forget everything about her life. It's hard to imagine why Eckert's musical-theatre piece, directed by Robert Woodruff, was a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize; the contemporary rendering, complete with atonal, arhythmic music, projected videos of flowing honey and a naked woman, and pretentiously overblown emotions, only detracts from the depth and beauty of the original myth. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Through Dec. 20.)

RACE
Ruthlessness of a rhetorical kind is part of the fun of David Mamet's new play (directed by the author), his latest exercise in contrarian provocation. "Do you know what you can say? To a black man. On the subject of race?" Henry Brown (David Alan Grier), a black lawyer, says to Charles Strickland (Richard Thomas), a rich, white potential client who is accused of raping a black woman. "Nothing," Charles says. "That is correct," Henry replies. Henry's firm has three lawyers—two of them black—which is the reason that Charles has sought them out. The lawyers' rebarbative style happens also to be Mamet's. Having declared recently, in a piece he wrote for the *Times*, that debates about race are, for the most part, "nothing but sanctimony," Mamet offers instead nothing but cynicism. In this, he is an equal-opportunity employer. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/14/09.) (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

SO HELP ME GOD!
When will a smart, talented producer realize that the actress Kristen Johnston is her generation's Carol Burnett and build a revue around her considerable comic gifts? Like the flame-haired comedian in her best TV sketches, Johnston is so physically graceful that she can play awkward like nobody's business. She's strongest when she portrays monsters who know they're not smarter than everyone else, just more willful. Which is precisely why her Lily Darnley, in this minor comic gem from 1929 (presented by the Mint, directed by Jonathan Bank), is so appealing: we know Lily's a malefactor when it comes to protecting her place in the theatre. We know, too, that no matter how badly she behaves, in the end, she'll get her way. A bottle blonde with a cigarette-husky voice, Lily's the star of a show that's not doing very well on the road, and she rarely speaks a line that she

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
HER FIFTEEN MINUTES

Gladys Glover (Judy Holliday), a lonely young woman in New York, becomes famous by putting her name on a huge billboard in Columbus Circle. Yet she never knows why she wants fame, or what's wrong with getting it without earning it, or what she's going to do with it once she's got it. George Cukor's 1954 satirical comedy "It Should Happen to You" (at Film Forum Dec. 17), written by Garson Kanin, seems utterly contemporary. Nobodies become somebodies a lot faster now, but otherwise nothing has changed—the desperation, the nutty self-aggrandizement, the public's eagerness to be impressed. Holliday makes Gladys shrewd in practical matters yet maddeningly vague and a bit of a prude—what Gladys really wants, Cukor seems to be suggesting, is romance and sex, only she doesn't know it. Two men pursue her: the sleek, seductive Peter Lawford, as a businessman in a stunning white Jaguar XK 120, and Jack Lemmon, as a documentary filmmaker wielding a windup Bell & Howell.

—*David Denby*

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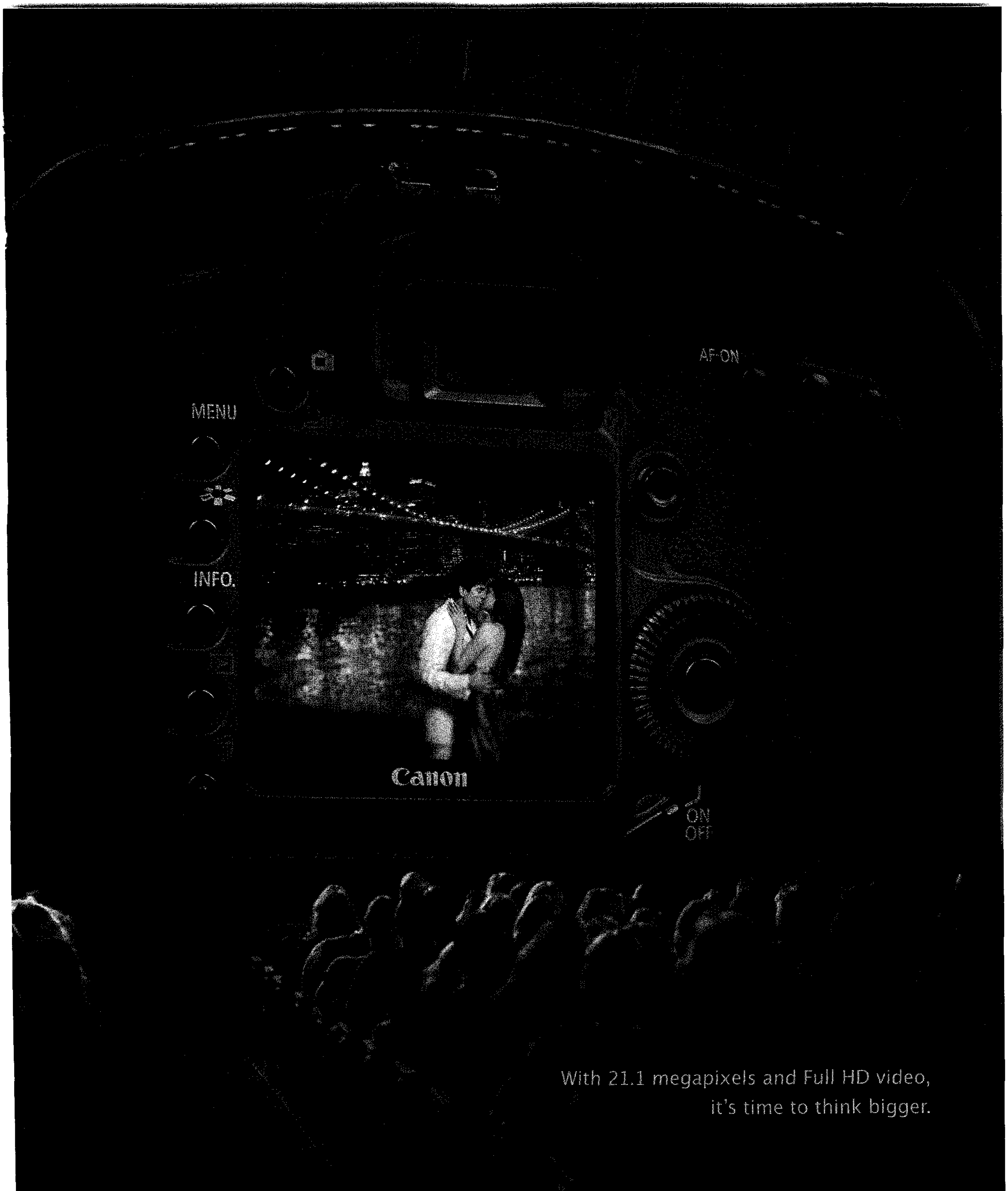
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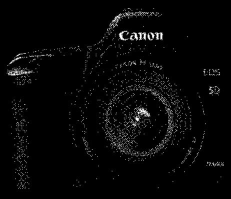

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doesn't think should be rewritten. As eventually happens to most stars, Lily is about to be upstaged by an ingenue, Kerry Lane (the charming Anna Chlumsky). While a number of gents in the cast and crew buy Lane's innocent act, Lily knows a rival when she sees one, and does everything in her considerable power to stop Lane from becoming a success. Written by Maurine Dallas Watkins—who gave us "Chicago"—this play is laced with Watkins's sermonizing about the evils of show biz, but no matter. Johnston buoys the workmanlike script by creating a character who is richer than the author could have imagined. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. Through Dec. 20.)

Shakespeare's Globe presents "Love's Labour's Lost" at Michael Schimmel Center.

GRADY McFERRIN

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

When we first encounter Cate Blanchett as Blanche DuBois in the Sydney Theatre Company's thrilling production of Tennessee Williams's play (directed by Liv Ullmann), she is heading to the home of her younger sister, Stella Kowalski (the excellent Robin McLeavy), who lives with her husband, Stanley (Joel Edgerton). As the play unfolds, the extent of Blanche's losses becomes clear: she has lost her husband, her family home, her job, her good name, her purity, and, ultimately, her sanity. Blanchett, with her alert mind, her informed heart, and her lithe, patrician silhouette, gets it right from the first beat. She doesn't make the usual mistake of foreshadowing Blanche's end at the play's beginning; she allows Blanche a slow, fascinating decline. Ullmann's direction delivers so much pleasure that it's a shame that, at the finale, she doesn't deliver the play's meaning. Her reductive decisions build to vulgar sentimentality, with Blanche isolated in a spotlight and lost in her own internal music as the curtain falls. Although this doesn't spoil the evening, it's a woeful miscalculation. (12/14/09) (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through Dec. 20.)

THIS

Melissa James Gibson's play, about neurotic New York thirty-somethings, is less grating than that description might suggest, and far cleverer. The best lines belong, naturally, to Alan (Glenn Fitzgerald), the self-loathing gay best friend ("I have no problem with self-involvement—except in others"), but we are meant to focus on Jane (the alluring Julianne Nicholson), a young, widowed poet who crosses the line with a married friend. The play starts out like a brooding rom-com—imagine a "Friends" episode with a Hamlet complex—but soon earns its contemplative streak. Gibson has insightful things to say about marriage, grief, and Brita filters; on these subjects and others, the play's droll wisdom feels hard-won. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

A VERY SANDWICH CHRISTMAS

The ten-year-old troupe Banana Bag & Bodice rings in the holiday season with its own brand of demented merriment. Expect songs, deli meat, creepy animal heads, and plenty of non sequiturs. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101. Through Dec. 19.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE BROTHER/SISTER PLAYS:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Dec. 20. **BYE BYE BIRDIE:** Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **FELA!:** O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **FINIAN'S RAINBOW:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **GOD OF CARNAGE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IDIOT SAVANT:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Dec. 20. **IN THE NEXT ROOM OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IRVING BERLIN'S WHITE CHRISTMAS:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **LET ME DOWN EASY:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **LOVE, LOSS, AND WHAT I WORE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MEMPHIS:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **RAGTIME:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **ROCK OF AGES:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **THE STARRY MESSENGER:** Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Dec. 19. **SUPERIOR DONUTS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE UNDERSTUDY:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **WEST SIDE STORY:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-239-6200. **WISHFUL DRINKING:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **ZERO HOUR:** Theatre at St. Clements, 423 W. 46th St. 212-279-4200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Dec. 19: **Garage a Trois** has a cheeky name, but it is one serious outfit. Featuring the revered talents of the saxophonist Skerik, the keyboardist Marco Benevento, the vibraphonist Mike Dillon, and the drummer Stanton Moore, the group plays a dizzying instrumental fusion of funk, jazz, noise, and rock, flecked with deft improvisation. Its latest album is a bold endeavor titled "Power Patriot."

THE CONCERT HALL

New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. (212-277-7179)—Dec. 18: **Steve Earle** grew up in Texas and was a key member of the alt-country-rock invasion of Nashville, but now he probably wouldn't mind being called the new Dave Van Ronk, the godfather of folk music and a denizen of Greenwich Village in the sixties, whose girth and raspy voice somewhat mirror Earle's own. He's an ardent New Yorker who moved here in 2004 and whose 2007 album, "Washington Square Serenade," was a true love letter to the city. Earle's latest record is "Townes," all songs by his first mentor, Townes Van Zandt.

DEATH BY AUDIO

49 S. 2nd St., Brooklyn (No phone)—Dec. 17: **Future Islands** are an achingly earnest synth-pop trio whose heart-on-their-sleeve approach is made all the more convincing by the vocalist Sam Herring's robust delivery. They're driving up from Baltimore to celebrate the release of "Post Office Wave Chapel," a twelve-inch remix record on Chicago's Thrill Jockey label that features four new interpretations of the band's songs, including "Little Dreamer," on which the sultry crooner Victoria Legrand (of Beachhouse) contributes guest vocals. The Brooklyn electro-pop duo and boom-box enthusiasts **Javelin** also contributed to the record, and will be on hand to celebrate as well.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM

431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Dec. 27: The soul singer **Amel Larrieux.**

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Dec. 17: The singer-songwriter **Mike Errico** rings in the holidays. Dec. 26-31: Though largely renowned (and, in some cases, reviled) for her confrontational comedy, **Sandra Bernhard** has another side, which has garnered fewer headlines, specifically her singing. Earlier this year, the comedienne released "Whatever It Takes," an album of her own brand of rock with a hefty dollop of Latin and Indian-inspired rhythm. These year-end shows will be a mix of music and comedy.

KNITTING FACTORY

361 Metropolitan Ave., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (347-529-6696)—Brian McMahan is perhaps best known for founding the prominent math-rock act Slint; although the group disbanded in the early nineties, they have tentatively returned to the live circuit over the past four years. During the band's downtime, McMahan continues to perform with his hypnotic post-rock act **The for Carnation.** They're here Dec. 17. With **Mountains.** Dec. 23: Edging ever closer to accessibility with each successive release, Texas's **Secret Machines** still couch their sprawling, neo-psychedelic sound in the booming percussion and droning guitars of vintage Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd, but over the course of their last two albums they've reined in more of their prog-rock tenden-

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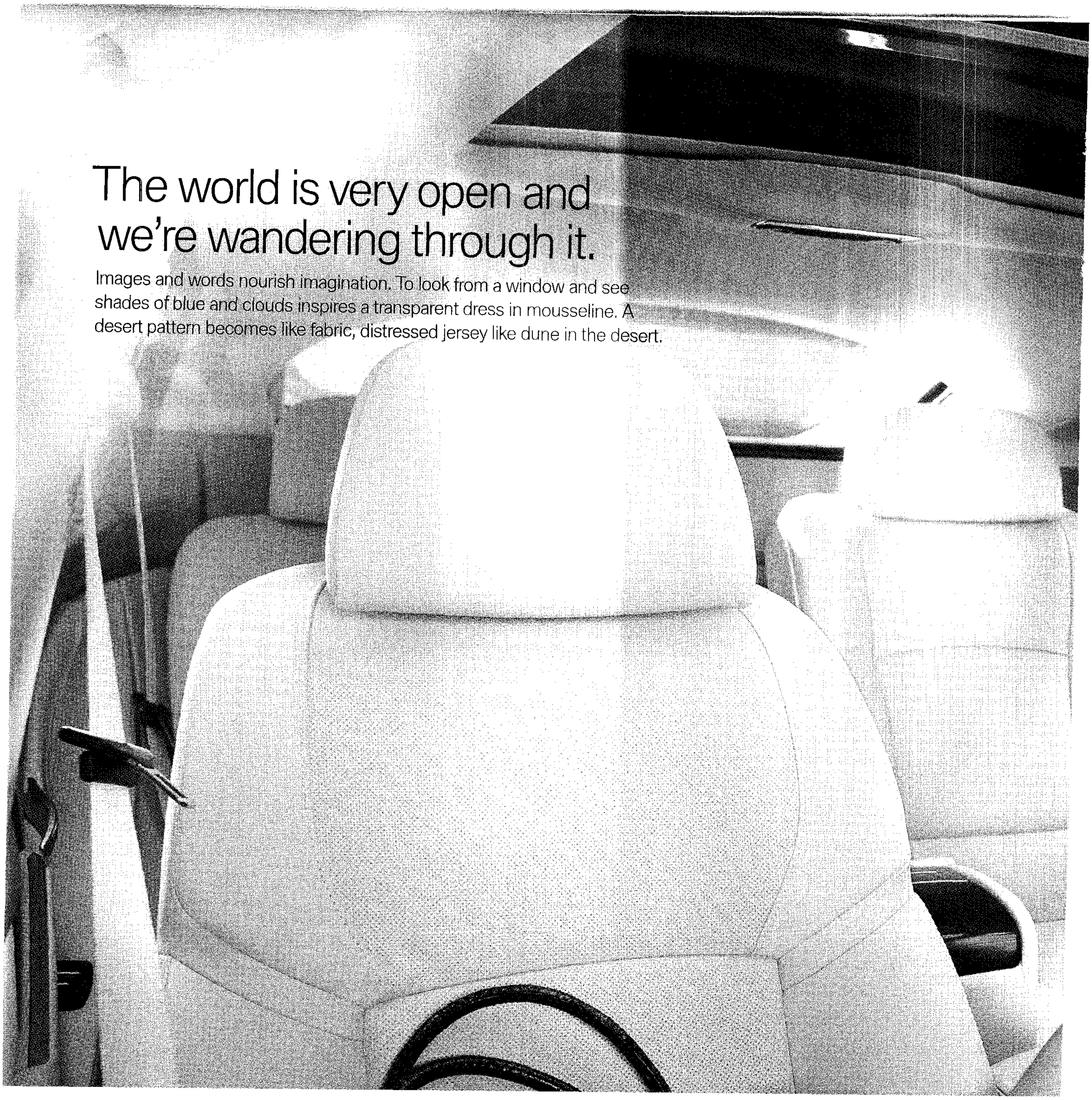

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cies to woo the indie-pop crowd. As a live act, however, their emphasis remains firmly on full-tilt sensory engulfment.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE

158 Bleecker St. (212-505-3474)—Dec. 18: The New York noise-rock duo **White Out** celebrate the release of "Senso," an intense live double album that includes Thurston Moore sitting in on guitar and the Chicago-based experimental musician and producer Jim O'Rourke handling keyboards. The percussionist Tom Surgal and the multi-instrumentalist Lin Culbertston first came together in 1995, and they tend to employ a wide array of instruments, including analogue synthesizers, electric autoharp, flute, drums, singing bowls, and metal scraps to fuel their improvisatory and sometimes brilliant jams. "Senso" was recorded in 2004 at the now defunct Lower East Side club Tonic, and it's an excellent showcase of White Out's strengths—dissonant chaos and rhythmic non sequiturs that evoke the angular modernism of the "Bitches Brew"-era Miles Davis groups. This performance will feature Moore. The long-standing Philadelphia psychedelic-rock outfit **Bardo Pond** shares the bill.

SANTOS PARTY HOUSE

96 Lafayette St. (212-584-5492)—Dec. 18: The Pittsburgh duo **Zombi** perform ambitious rock instrumentals that unapologetically recall the moody soundtracks of the cult filmmaker Dario Argento's best Italian horror epics; if they wanted to avoid the comparison, they wouldn't have taken their name from the international title of George Romero's classic splatter film "Dawn of the Dead," scored by the prog-rock visionaries of Goblin and released abroad by Argento himself. Although their recent work pales in comparison to "Surface to Air," from 2006, their live shows continue to excite.

THE SEPHARDIC MUSIC FESTIVAL

The fifth edition of this annual gathering features a diverse sampling of traditional and hybrid artists who have a connection to the Sephardic Jewish world. This year's festival includes a performance on Dec. 17 at Joe's Pub by **Electro Morocco,** a group of Israeli expatriates who combine electronica with Sephardic-tinged melodies. (Through Dec. 19. For more information, visit www.sephardicmusicfestival.com.)

SHEA STADIUM

20 Meadow St., Brooklyn (no phone)—Charlie Looker has been an active figure on the downtown experimental scene since he graduated from Wesleyan University, in 2003. He has explored a "brutal chamber" sound as a principal member of Zs throughout the decade while cultivating a musical dialogue with artists as diverse as the Dirty Projectors and John Zorn. On Dec. 18, Looker presents **Extra Life,** a project that finds him exploring the unlikely concurrence between early music and math rock.

S.O.B.'S

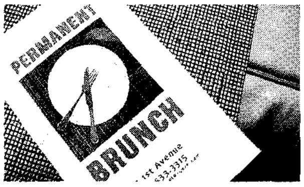
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Dec. 17: The Cuban-born entertainer **Albita.**

THE STONE

Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—Dec. 17: **Larkin Grimm** is a nomadic psychedelic-folk singer-songwriter with a colorful past. Until she was six, Grimm was raised in a Memphis-based religious cult, and as an adult she dropped out of Yale University, lived alone on a mountaintop in southern Alaska, and befriended a Cherokee shaman named Jezebel Crow who encouraged her to take natural hallucinogens and to finish her degree, both of which she eventually did. Her musical background is no less rich. From ages six to thirteen, she lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Georgia and absorbed Appalachian music from her fiddler father. More recently, she's played in the Dirty Projectors. Her own songs feature simple arpeggiated guitar chords that emphasize repetition. Her occasionally aggressive lyrics—"I Killed Someone (Part 2)" is one notable tune—belie her disarmingly gentle and inviting voice.

TABLES FOR TWO

PERMANENT BRUNCH



JESSIE WENDER

95 First Ave. (212-533-3315)—Wouldn't it be awesome, this East Village restaurant posits, to have bacon—five kinds!—for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? Actually, everyone does that these days. So add in fluffy pancakes, seared steak and eggs sunny-side-up, smoked salmon layered with avocado on seven-grain, and French toast stuffed with Hatfield ham and Five Spoke Creamery Tumbleweed cheese. And, to make it even more fun, how about letting customers show off their downtown couth by picking Hall & Oates and Barry Manilow tunes via network using their own iPods or iPhones or, in the case of the poor unsavvy saps without, the restaurant's device? Awesome? Well, perhaps.

The minuscule, golden-hued space is lined with precarious double-height tables flanked by tall banquettes and bar stools; the walls are covered with glass tiles inlaid with photographs of the New York City subway system, surely indicating a theme. (The logo on the restaurant's Web site is a clock with knife and fork hands constantly moving: Time flies, but it's always time for brunch? Brunch never sleeps? Like the subway, the service is good only during prime time?) The food may or may not be worth the wait. The star of "Baked Eggs" turns out to be a three-square-inch cube of meltingly tender short rib that sits solo on one side of the plate, abandoned by the mini-crock of nondescript potato-and-shredded-beef hash topped with two extremely baked eggs. When you order steak and eggs for breakfast, half the satisfaction is in tearing it apart, for full caveman effect. But here it comes sliced for you, and while the meat is well-prepared, the pitiful portion is dwarfed by the hulking slab of ciabatta on which it sits. The biscuits, paired with house-made strawberry jam, however, are as reliable as the Q train, buttery, tender, with a moist crumb, a little crunchy on the outside. The Artisanal Bacon Bar offers varieties—all delicious; it's bacon, after all—from Texas, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri; at three dollars for two or three little pieces, you have to order at least four kinds to feel indulgent. Beignets, dusted in powdered sugar, cap off the meal just fine—especially if it's between 11 and 4 on a Sunday.

Evenings are another story altogether. The restaurant's spin on fried chicken and waffles sounds too good to be true, and, one recent rainy sparsely populated night, it was, with a spongy, wheaty waffle and sweet, slightly greasy chicken. In answer to those lonely weeknights, the restaurant recently announced a tweak: it is reincarnating itself as Permanent Brunch and Burger. But if they're basing their new identity on the wan, undercooked double-patty specimen of a couple weeks ago, here's hoping they reinvent that, too. (Open daily for brunch and dinner. Entrées: $12-$21.)

—*Shauna Lyon*

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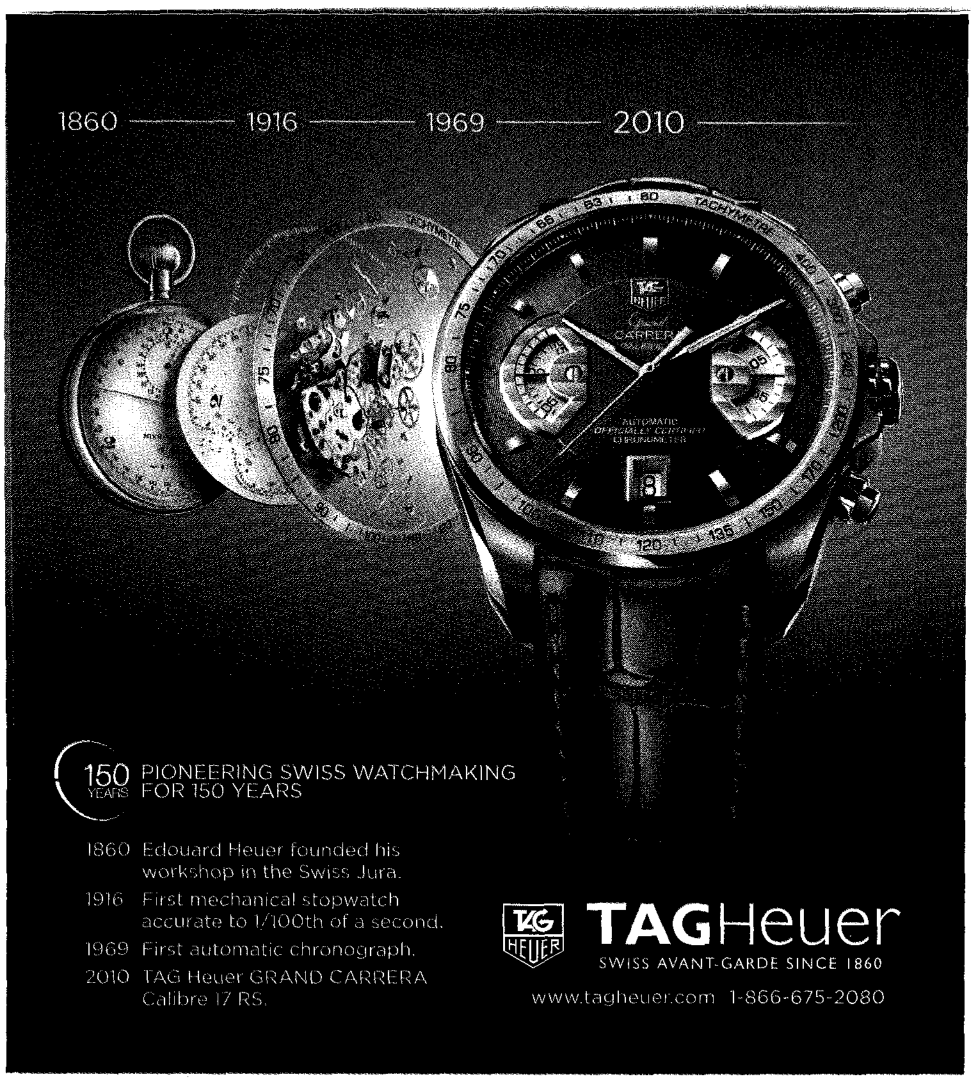
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JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Dec. 15-19: For its sixtieth-anniversary celebration, the club calls on the imperishable drummer **Roy Haynes**, who played at the December 15, 1949, opening (the current Birdland resides in a different location from the fabled original establishment). Dec. 20-25, early: A holiday tradition for more than twenty years, **"Bending Toward the Light: A Jazz Nativity,"** features the singer **Anne Phillips** and the saxophonist **Bob Kindred.** Dec. 22-26, late: Old-school expertise and unerring musicianship solidify **Freddy Cole's** status as jazz's premier singer. If he still reminds you of his brother, remember, there are much worse role models.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Dec. 15-31: Pop-star charisma, a pleasing trumpet tone, and the smarts to hire blue-chip support players have gotten **Chris Botti** mighty far in the jazz game.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Dec. 15-20: The pianist **Eric Reed** and the saxophonist **Victor Goines** cast new light on the well-crafted tunes of the perennially undervalued saxophonist Lucky Thompson. Dec. 21-27: The historically minded pianist **Marcus Roberts** is joined by the bassist **Rodney Jordan** and the drummer **Jason Marsalis,** the brother of Roberts's first major employer, Wynton.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Dec. 17-20: A beacon of uncompromising creativity, the brilliant alto saxophonist **Lee Konitz,** now in his early eighties, will be joined by three younger acolytes—the saxophonist **Mark Turner,** the pianist **Ethan Iverson,** and the bassist **Ben Street**—as well as the veteran drummer **Albert (Tootie) Heath.** Dec. 23-27: Four accomplished musicians—the guitarist **Mike Stern,** the saxophonist **Sonny Fortune,** the bassist **Buster Wiliams,** and the drummer **Jimmy Cobb**—all of whom have played with Miles Davis at one point or another in their careers (but none of whom played alongside each other in his bands) salute the Master.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Dec. 17-20: With the Zawinul Project, the saxophonist **Steve Wilson** pays tribute to the influential keyboardist and composer Joe Zawinul, who died two years ago. Zawinul's seminal work for Cannonball Adderley, Weather Report, and his own Zawinul Syndicate band, will provide plenty of grist for the mill. Dec. 22-23: The atypical but highly effective jazz trio of **Edmar Castaneda,** on Colombian harp, **Marshall Gilkes,** on trombone, and **David Silliman,** on percussion, expand their tonal palette with the addition of the vibraphonist **Joe Locke** and the singer **Andrea Tierra,** both of whom appear on Castaneda's new album, "Entre Cuerdas."

SULLIVAN HALL
214 Sullivan St., between Bleecker and W. 3rd Sts. (212-477-2782)—Dec. 27. The **Sun Ra Arkestra.** Many say Sun Ra didn't die, but went to Saturn instead. The obscure guru of afrofuturism left this earth (in one way or another) in 1993, but his cosmic jazz legacy lives on under the direction of Marshall Allen. The ensemble uniquely blends the entire jazz spectrum, from thirties swing to unbridled free jazz to the synthy sounds of outer space. This extra-festive "Holiday Spectacular" show is set to add a couple of holiday tunes to the mix.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Dec. 15-20 and Dec. 22-27: The meat-and-potatoes post-bop sensibility of the pianist **Cedar Walton's** new album, "Voices Deep Within," will come to life through his back-to-back trio and quartet appearances. **David Williams** on bass and **Willie Jones III** on drums support him the first week; the saxophonist **Vincent Herring** joins in

for the rest of the run. Dec. 28-Jan. 3: The **Bad Plus.** Although the trio's latest album, "For All I Care," added a singer, Wendy Lewis, for this important year's-end engagement the bad boys of jazz will be going it alone. Expect quirky originals amid spirited deconstructions of modern pop songs rarely heard within these hallowed walls.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—"**Velázquez Rediscovered.**" Through Feb. 7. ♦ "**The 'Young Archer,' Attributed to Michelangelo.**" Ongoing. ♦ "**Art of the Samurai: Japanese Arms and Armor, 1156-1868.**" Through Jan. 10. ♦ "**American Stories: Paintings of Everyday Life, 1765-1915.**" Through Jan. 24. ♦ "**Looking In: Robert Frank's 'The Americans.'**" Through Jan. 3. ♦ "**Sounding the Pacific: Musical Instruments of Oceania.**" Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—"**Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity.**" Through Jan. 25. ♦ "**Tim Burton.**" Through April 26. ♦ "**Monet's Water Lilies.**" Through April 12. ♦ "**New Photography 2009: Walead Beshty, Daniel Gordon, Leslie Hewitt, Carter Mull, Sterling Ruby, Sara VanDerBeek.**" Through Jan. 11. ♦ "**Gabriel Orozco.**" Through March 1. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—"**Kandinsky.**" Through Jan. 13. ♦ "**Anish Kapoor: Memory.**" Through March 28. (Open Fridays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturday evenings until 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—"**Roni Horn aka Roni Horn.**" Through Jan. 24. ♦ "**Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction.**" Through Jan. 17. ♦ "**Omer Fast: Nostalgia.**" Through Feb. 14. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"**Who Shot Rock & Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present.**" Through Jan. 31. ♦ "**James Tissot: 'The Life of Christ.'**" Through Jan. 17. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—"**Traveling the Silk Road: Ancient Pathway to the Modern World.**" Through Aug. 15. ♦ "**Extreme Mammals: The Biggest, Smallest, and Most Amazing Mammals of All Time.**" Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—"**Up Close: Henry Darger and the Coloring Book.**" Through Sept. 13. ♦ "**Thomas Chambers (1808-1869): American Marine and Landscape Painter.**" Through March 7. ♦ "**Approaching Abstraction.**" Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—"**Katie Holten.**" Through Jan. 3. ♦ "**Intersections: The Grand Concourse Commissions.**" Through Jan. 3. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—"**Watteau to Degas: French Drawings from the Frits Lugt Collection.**" The prodigious Dutch connoisseur Lugt (1884-1970), a collector by the age of eight, acquired thousands of Old Master drawings, with a special fondness for the French eighteenth century. His successors at the Fondation Custodia, in Paris, have added nineteenth-century works, mostly Romantic and Barbizon landscapes. These excite far

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less than Lugt's ancien-régime gems, including an incredible street scene by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, "Le Boulevard" (circa 1760), whose bustling carriages, outdoor diners, urchin, beggar, and dog suggest a bewigged Reginald Marsh. The diminutive Fragonard (less than five feet tall) charms with a swift, sweet self-portrait. A tangy pocket drama by Nicolas Lavreince epitomizes the glad erotic cynicism of the seventeen-eighties: a gent springs a kiss on a lady as her chaperone dozes. Through Jan. 10. ◆ **"Exuberant Grotesques: Renaissance Maiolica from the Fontana Workshop."** Through Jan. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Alias Man Ray: The Art of Reinvention."** Through March 14. ◆ **"Reinventing Ritual: Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life."** Through Feb. 7. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 8, and Fridays, 11 to 4.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"A Woman's Wit: Jane Austen's Life and Legacy."** Through March 14. ◆ **"William Blake's World: 'A New Heaven Is Begun.'"** Through Jan. 3. ◆ **"Rococo and Revolution: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings."** Through Jan. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
2 Columbus Circle (212-299-7777)—**"Read My Pins: The Madeleine Albright Collection."** Through Jan. 31. ◆ **"Slash: Paper Under the Knife."** Through April 4. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future."** Through Jan. 31. ◆ **"Legacy: The Preservation of Wilderness in New York City."** Through March 21. ◆ **"Only in New York: Photographs from *Look* Magazine."** Through Jan. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
1 Bowling Green (212-514-3700)—**"A Song for the Horse Nation."** Through July 7. (Daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Urs Fischer: Marguerite de Ponty."** Through Feb. 7. ◆ **"Nikhil Chopra: Yog Raj Chitrakar, Memory Drawing IX."** Through Feb. 14. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN
Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—**"Holiday Train Show."** Through Jan. 10. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"1969."** A grayer affair, in mood as in hue, cannot be imagined. Cleverly organized by the critic and curator Neville Wakefield, who is an adviser to P.S. 1, the exhibition heralds a gathering dusk in its first room, with samples of major styles in decline. A floor piece of magnesium tiles by Carl Andre and a brassy wall unit by Donald Judd reiterate minimalism, like a bird stuck with just one song. A cartoonish drawing of a crazed face by John Wesley bids adieu to Pop. A big, remarkably drab painting by Helen Frankenthaler—a blue-gray cloudlike shape, in acrylic, soaked into a yellowing canvas—kisses off color-field, the last ditch of modernist formalism. Painting was dead in 1969. The avant-garde movements of the time were post-minimalism and conceptual art. Reacting against Pop and minimalism, they steered serious art into mazes of self-reference that it has not escaped to this day. Through April 5. ◆ **"Between Spaces."** Through April 5. ◆ **"Robert Bergman: Selected Portraits."** Through Jan. 4. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"O Zhang: Cutting the Blaze to New Frontiers."** Through March 13. ◆ **"Duke Riley: Those About to Die Salute You."** Through March 13. ◆ **"Daniel Bozhkov: Republic of Perpetual Reconstitution and Rebuild."** Through March 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, noon to 5.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"30 Seconds Off an Inch."** Through March 14. ◆ **"Wardell Milan: Drawings of Harlem."** Through March 14. ◆ **"A Delicate Touch: Watercolors from the Permanent Collection."** Through March 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

"THE METROPOLIS BETWEEN YOUR EARS"
The gallery's mission is to align scholars and artists; its current show borrows a title and premise from a lecture by the Emory University professor Michael Moon, about Romanticism and the post-industrial city. "Manhatta," a black-and-white film, made in 1921 by Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, is accompanied by projections of five contemporary homages, posted on YouTube. Paul Chan's animation, "34 Flower Types for Henry Darger," hybridizes the hallucinatory fantasies of the Chicago artist and the utopian socialism of Charles Fourier. The big revelation is "The Ape of Nature," an installation by the film-video bricoleur Peggy Ahwesh, who considers the fate of factory towns, including her native Pittsburgh, combining techniques as far-flung as hypnosis with straight documentary footage. Through Jan. 3. (James gallery, CUNY Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Ave., at 34th St. 212-817-7138.)

Short List

PHILIP GUSTON: McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-688-5951. Through Dec. 31. **RAY PARKER:** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-6780. Through Jan. 9. **GERHARD RICHTER:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Jan. 9. **JANE WILSON:** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-247-2111. Through Dec. 23. **JOHN ZINSSER:** Graham, 32 E. 67th St. 212-535-5767. Through Jan. 5.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

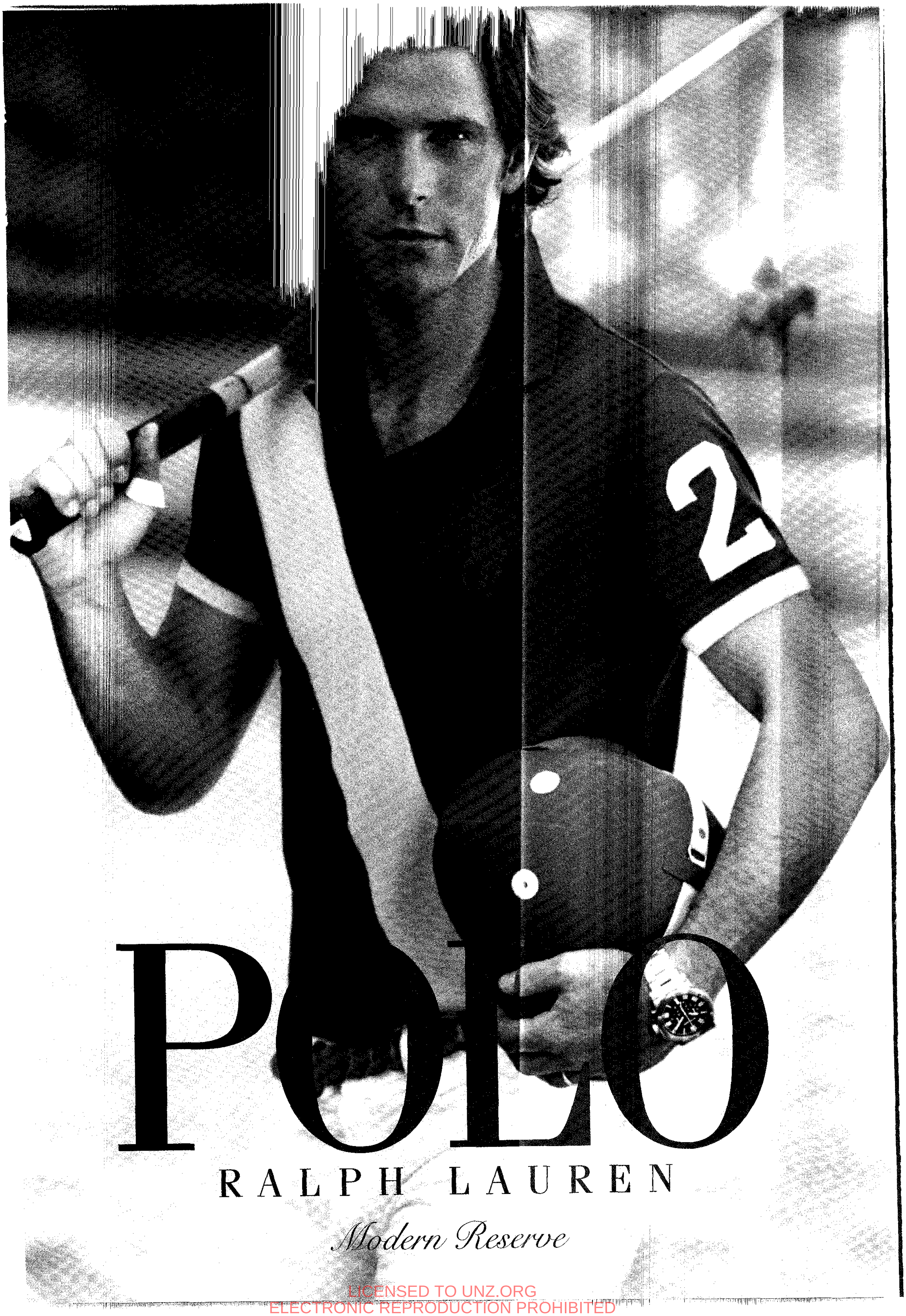
MOYRA DAVEY
If you missed the photographer's first retrospective, at Harvard's Fogg Museum last year, here's a remix: a beautifully installed selection of works, spanning two decades. The closely observed visual essays pledge allegiance to in-between moments—portraits of the obsolescent (record albums) and the overlooked (pennies). Fifty-four small black-and-white pictures, taken between 1996 and 2000, document empty whiskey bottles on daytime kitchen counters; installed in a grid, the piece is at once a matter-of-fact index and an ode to morning-after melancholy. Thirty-two unique color C-prints of everyday things—cluttered tabletops, clock faces, keys dangling in doors—made in Paris, then folded and mailed to friends in New York, wrap around three walls. Marred by postmarks and handwriting, with scraps of tape still attached, they're battered monuments to memory, correspondence, and lost time. Through Dec. 24. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

SASHA BEZZUBOV AND JESSICA SUCHER
This collaborative team's handsome color photographs of spiritual tourists in India invite a certain skepticism. Their subjects are Western devotees of various Eastern beliefs, many of whom have taken ascetic vows and utterly transformed their looks and their lives. They pose in saris and robes at ashrams, schools, yoga retreats, and, in the case of one American sadhu, in a cave. A white-robed man sits at the threshold of the Love-Peace-Happiness Cottage. Bezzubov and Sucher take no editorial stance; their work is, apparently, as sincere as their subjects' faith. But true believers have an aura of blissed-out conviction that nonbelievers can't help but challenge, and this show might test your patience. Through Dec. 23. (Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.)

Short List

ROBERT BERGMAN: Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through Jan. 9. **BRIAN CALVIN:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Through Jan. 16. **ROZ CHAST:** Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410. Through Jan. 9. **ROBERT COLESCOTT:** Kravets/Wehby, 529 W. 21st St. 212-352-2238. Through Jan. 16. **RICHARD HAWKINS:** Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770. Through Jan. 23. **WILLIAM J. O'BRIEN:** Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889. Through Dec. 19. **NORBERT SCHWONTKOWSKI:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through Jan. 9. **JON PYLYPCHUK:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Jan. 30. **PAOLO VENTURA:** Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, 537 W. 24th St. 212-627-0006. Through Jan. 23. **"BESIDES, WITH, AGAINST, AND YET: ABSTRACTION AND THE READY-MADE GESTURE":** The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Through Jan. 16. **"IN NUMBERS: SERIAL PUBLICATIONS BY ARTISTS SINCE 1955":** X Initiative, 548 W. 22nd St. 917-697-4886. Through Jan. 30. **"MORPHOLOGICAL MUTINY":** Nolan, 527 W. 29th St. 212-925-6190. Through Jan. 23. **"NATURAL SYMPATHIES: SYLVIA PLIMACK MANGOLD AND LOVIS CORINTH":** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474. Through Jan. 16.

JASHAR AWAN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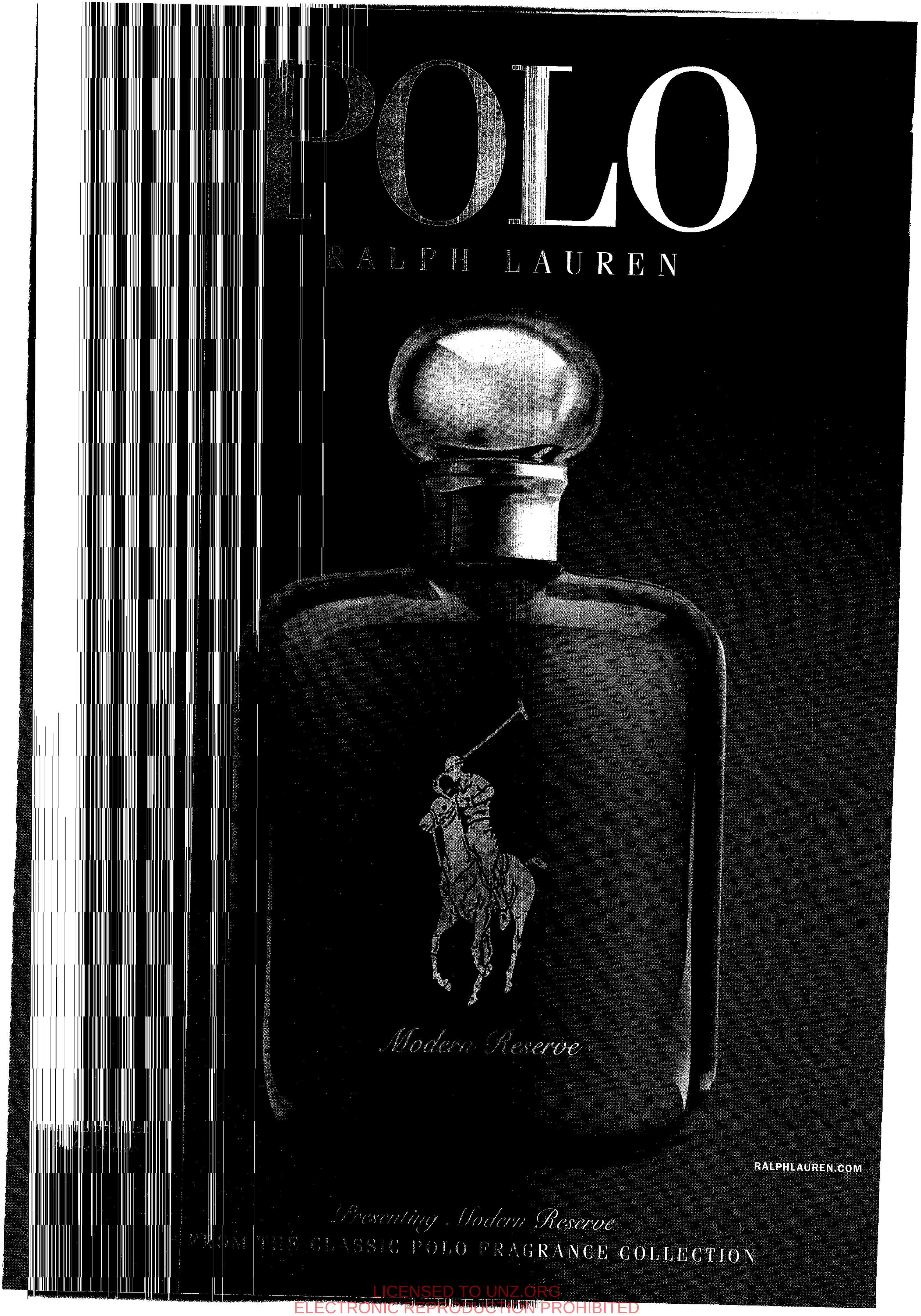
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GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

MARCEL BROODTHAERS
In 1964, at the age of forty, Broodthaers declared himself an artist, fed up with his low-paying job as a poet. When he died, on his fifty-second birthday, the Belgian conceptualist was a bona-fide star, embraced by the very institutions he skewered. His 1974 installation "Don't Say I Didn't Say So—the Parrot," on view for the first time in the U.S., brilliantly parodies the self-reflexive conceit of a living artist's retrospective (it opened at the same time as Broodthaer's museum show in Brussels). An African gray parrot is caged between two potted palms, near a copy of a Broodthaers catalogue and a recording of him reciting a very repetitive poem. The fact that the parrot employed by the gallery is as quiet as a mouse just upgrades the absurdity. Through Dec. 23. (Freeman, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-5154.)

PAOLA FERRARIO
Like so many contemporary photographers, Ferrario sees the world glancingly and in fragments. The unframed color pictures here focus solely on bits of environments: graffiti, torn posters, cartoon stickers, a plastic bag wedged in the crack between concrete blocks. Taken out of context, these scraps are not always recognizable, and when Ferrario combines them in diptychs, triptychs, and other arrangements they can look almost painterly and abstract. Although too many of the photographs feel not just ephemeral but negligible, the over-all effect is, quite unexpectedly, charming. And the casual, tacked-to-the-wall presentation is just right. Through Jan. 10. (Scott, 1 Rivington St. 212-358-8767.)

LEE FRIEDLANDER
With just forty-seven new and recent photographs, this is a relatively sparse show for Friedlander, but it would probably look crowded with half that number. Each picture is so dense with visual information that it could use a wall to itself. Friedlander thrives on too-muchness: confusion, disjunction, reflection (often involving sly self-portraiture). The images-within-images here include a number of thrift-store, coffee-shop, and beauty-parlor windows that mirror nearby façades. There are pictures taken in California, Texas, Mississippi, and Sweden, but a New York City grittiness prevails, most notably in the shot of half a car and a gutter full of water and trash. Irving Penn might have turned the debris into something elegant, but Friedlander appreciates the mess—and all marvellous chaos. Through Jan. 16. (Borden, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-431-0166.)

Short List

ERIK HANSON: Sunday L.E.S., 237 Eldridge St. 212-253-0700. Through Dec. 31. **ERIN SHIRREFF:** Cooley, 34 Orchard St. 212-680-0564. Through Dec. 20. **"ALMOST":** Beauchene, 21 Orchard St. 212-375-8043. Through Jan. 17. **"BEGINNINGLESS THOUGHT / ENDLESS SEEING: THE WORKS OF STUART SHERMAN":** 80 WSE, 80 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-5747. Through Dec. 19. **"FROTTAGE":** Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774. Through Jan. 23. **"STUART SHERMAN: NOTHING UP MY SLEEVE":** Participant, Inc., 253 E. Houston St. 212-254-4334. Through Dec. 20. **"SKULTURE":** Feature, 131 Allen St. 212-675-7772. Through Jan. 23.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Balanchine's staging of "The Nutcracker" has been entertaining and delighting children (and adults) since its première, in 1954. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Dec. 15-17, Dec. 21, and Dec. 28-29 at 6; Dec. 18 at 8; Dec. 19 and Dec. 26 at 2 and 8; Dec. 20 and Dec. 27 at 1 and 5; Dec. 22-23 at 2 and 6; and Dec. 24 at 3. Through Jan. 3.)

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE
The middle stretch of Ailey's season, the full repertory now on spin, is distinguished by guests. Anna Deavere Smith takes a break from her Off Broadway show to voice the interviews she conducted with dancers for "Hymn," the 1993 tribute to the company's founder choreographed by Judith Jamison, who's getting her own tributes this year for two decades of artistic direction. Ailey's early work "Blues Suite" is enlivened and a little overshadowed by the full-throated accompaniment of Kenny Brawner and the Brawner Brothers Band. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Dec. 15, Dec. 22, and Dec. 29 at 7; Dec. 16-18 and Dec. 23-25 at 8; Dec. 19 and Dec. 26 at 2 and 8; and Dec. 20 and Dec. 27 at 3 and 7:30. Through Jan. 3.)

"RASTA THOMAS' ROCK THE BALLET"
What is the opposite of conceptual dance? It may well be this show, the brainchild of the onetime classical dancer and "Movin' Out" star Rasta Thomas and his wife, Adrienne Canterna-Thomas. The Bad Boys of Dance, as their troupe is known, strive to free ballet from its prissy aura, mixing it with hip-hop, Broadway-style jazz, and tap, spicing it up with snazzy visuals, and proclaiming loud and clear that ballet is sexy, spectacular, and, yes, very masculine. Don't expect a spiritual awakening, but you may well see some very good dancing. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Dec. 15-16, Dec. 22-23, and Dec. 29 at 7:30; Dec. 17-19 at 8; Dec. 20 and Dec. 27 at 2 and 7:30; and Dec. 26 at 2 and 8. Through Jan. 3.)

"THE GOOD DANCE—DAKAR/BROOKLYN"
Reggie Wilson, whose takes on the African diaspora manage to be both informed and original, met the Congolese choreographer Andréya Ouamba in Senegal in 2002. Since then, various work-in-progress showings have given promising hints of what a collaboration between the two men might yield: a piece that moves with supple force and sidles up to its themes. In the case of "The Good Dance," those themes include the vast cultural influence of the Congo region and what the choreographers do and do not have in common. Wilson's Fist & Heel Performance Group and Ouamba's Compagnie 1er Temps join the exploration and amplify it, but the core of the work is a duet between two compelling dancers, two inquisitive sensibilities. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 16 and Dec. 18-19 at 7:30.)

"REPLICA"
Daniel Arsham, Jonah Bokaer, and Judith Sánchez-Ruíz suggest signal glitches through rhythm and flashes of tenderness through mutual support. (New Museum, 235 Bowery, at Prince St. 212-219-1222. Dec. 17-18 at 7.)

"FRÄULEIN MARIA" / "NUT/CRACKED"
Doug Elkins's "Fräulein Maria" is an affectionate, tongue-in-cheek homage to the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic "Sound of Music"; David Parker's "Nut/Cracked" is a Tchaikovsky-inspired vaudevillian romp. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. "Fräulein Maria": Dec. 17-19 at 7:30. "Nut/Cracked": Dec. 19-20 at 2.)

KOTA YAMAZAKI/FLUID HUG-HUG WITH CÉCILE PITOIS
The Japanese choreographer Kota Yamazaki, based in New York since 2002, is a stylistic magpie, gathering whatever catches his eye, with results that have ranged from revelatory to beguiling to amateurish. For "Rays of Space," what's captured his attention is the work of the French artist Cécile Pitois, who makes a kind of installation out of St. Mark's Church and its refractions of light. In this environment, Yamazaki sets his dancers afloat, connected and separated by an impalpable architecture. (Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Dec. 17-19 at 8.)

NICHOLAS ANDRE DANCE
Now in its sixth season, this small contemporary-dance troupe presents an evening of new and repertory works at Joyce SoHo. Nick Ross, the artistic director and choreographer, combines elements of ballet with a bit of yoga and some martial arts,

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
HARD-LUCK STORIES

The breathlessly over-the-top critical support that propelled the 1998 publication of Robert Bergman's photographs of Americans on the margins (in his afterword, Meyer Schapiro called the portraits "truly profound works of art") seemed all out of proportion to the modesty and intimacy of the work itself. A new burst of enthusiasm has resulted in Bergman's first major exhibitions—three simultaneous shows, at the National Gallery of Art, P.S.1, and the Yossi Milo gallery. It's a welcome opportunity to see what all the fuss was about. The artist has refrained from commenting on his work or his subjects, many of whom appear homeless, damaged, or troubled. Photographed on the street, often at uncomfortably close range, they look touchingly vulnerable, even when their gaze is averted. Bergman achieves some marvellous effects with burnished color, but his connection to these men and women feels tenuous and strained, and too often ends in a painful, frustrating standoff.

—*Vince Aletti*

ROBERT BERGMAN, "UNTITLED" (1990), COURTESY THE ARTIST AND YOSSI MILO GALLERY, NEW YORK

as well as pedestrian movement. The two new works feature music by Steve Reich and Philip Glass. (155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Dec. 17-20 at 8.)

"FRIDAYS AT NOON"
Claire Porter, known for comedic dance monologues in which she teases the humor out of such everyday situations as waiting at the airport and fund-raising, hosts a program of work by her friends: Amy Larimer (a founding member of Nicholas Leichter Dance), Sarah Skaggs (who explores the overlap of popular dance and more formal performance), and Susan Thomasson (a former soloist with Pilobolus and Anna Sokolow Dance Theatre). Porter will also present her satire of local television, "Breaking News." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Dec. 18 at noon.)

DOUG VARONE / "STRIPPED"
In his third studio showing, the downtown choreographer Doug Varone will present three pieces spanning his career (including "Bench Quartet," from his first program, in 1986) as well as a work in progress, "Chapters from a Broken Novel." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-279-3344. Dec. 18 at 8.)

NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET / "THE NUTCRACKER"
New York Theatre Ballet's tasteful and quick staging—only an hour long!—celebrates its twenty-fifth season. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. Dec. 19-20 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY
The company offers a sneak peek of the upcoming City Center season, which marks Paul Taylor's eightieth birthday. The program includes a cross-section of Taylor's styles, from his luscious, neo-Baroque "Cascade" (1999) to his sexually charged romp "Dream Girls" (2002). In the middle lies "Changes," from 2008, his meditation on themes from the sixties. (Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. 718-760-0064. Dec. 19 at 2 and 8 and Dec. 20 at 3.)

SOLEDAD BARRIO & NOCHE FLAMENCA
Though the company is from Spain, you'd be hard pressed to find a flamenco aficionado in this city who doesn't embrace the troupe, season after season, as a home-town favorite. Perhaps it is in gratitude, then, that Martín Santangelo, the artistic director, offers a new piece honoring the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Americans who fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War. Such choreographic efforts by Santangelo tend to be slight, as if he understood that the essential gift is not novelty but rather the musicians, the dance solos of Antonio Jimenez and Juan Ogalla, and, above all, the *siguiriya* or *soleá* of the incomparable Soledad Barrio. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 29 at 8, Dec. 26 at 5 and 8, and Dec. 27 at 5. Through Jan. 16.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

"MESSIAH"
Handel's "entertainment" on Christian themes is getting a great workout in Gotham this season. Perhaps the most formidable of the final performances on offer are those of the New York Philharmonic, which has hired the eminent German chorus master Helmuth Rilling to conduct the piece, with his superbly disciplined Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart in tow. The soloists include the countertenor Daniel Taylor and the bass Shenyang. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Dec. 15-19 at 7:30.) ♦ One of the city's finest "Messiah" alternatives has long been provided by the excellent professional chorus Musica Sacra, which performs in a lean but firmly elegant style under the leadership of Kent Tritle. The impressive lineup of soloists includes the soprano Julianne Baird and the countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 21-22 at 8.) ♦ The last-chance "Messiah" comes courtesy of the Masterwork Chorus, a fine avocational group that has been performing the piece at Carnegie Hall for several decades. Andrew Megill conducts. (212-247-7800. Dec. 23 at 8.)

ST. THOMAS CHOIR: "A CEREMONY OF CAROLS"
An intimate way to appreciate the sounds of the season is offered annually by the boys of John Scott's renowned Anglican choir, who sing Benjamin Britten's gossamer masterwork to the accompaniment of the harpist Anna Reinersman; carol arrangements by John Rutter complete the concert. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. www.saintthomaschurch.org. Dec. 17 at 5:30.)

"CANTATAS IN CONTEXT" SERIES: "CHRISTMAS ORATORIO"
Mary Greer's series of all-Bach performances with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and the New York Baroque Soloists chorus returns this season, beginning with Parts I through III of the "Christmas Oratorio," which, despite its considerable length, is really a sequence of Nativity cantatas. The vocal soloists include the soprano Ilana Davidson and the tenor William Ferguson (as the Evangelist). (Park Avenue Christian Church, Park Ave. at 85th St. www.smarttix.com. Dec. 20 at 3.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: ANONYMOUS 4
For two decades, this female vocal quartet has been singing medieval music with intensity and grace. Their new holiday program, "The Cherry Tree," is a concert that tells the Nativity story through songs and carols from medieval England (and early America). (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Dec. 20 at 4.)

"BASICALLY BRANDENBURG"
Upper West Siders can take in Bach's Brandenburg Concertos—for many, a secular holiday tradition—at Symphony Space in an "All-Star" performance that features such musicians as the flutist Eugenia Zukerman and the harpsichordist Bradley Brookshire. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 20 at 7.)

LIONHEART: "TYDINGS TREW"
To hear a Christmas concert in the majestic intimacy of the Metropolitan Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall is an essential New York experience. As the holiday approaches, this acclaimed local chamber choir offers carols, chants, and motets for the Christmas feast days of Elizabethan England, sung in church and on the street. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Dec. 22 at 6:30 and 8:30.)

CHRISTMAS EVE AT BARGEMUSIC
After the big sounds of "Messiah" and the Brandenburgs have come and gone, one can celebrate the holiday more serenely at the floating chamber-music series, where the invaluable pianist Steven Beck performs the Goldberg Variations—with plenty of time to scoot off to midnight Mass. Cookies and eggnog sweeten the deal. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Dec. 24 at 8.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Making a supreme effort, the young Maltese tenor Joseph Calleja brings not only his honeyed voice to the title role of **"Les Contes d'Hoffmann"** but also a genuine willingness to meet the demands of Bartlett Sher's complex and colorful new staging. (It's a big improvement over Otto Schenk's stolid production from 1982.) Anna Netrebko, as Antonia, is easily the finest of Hoffmann's three imaginary lovers; Kate Lindsey is a sleek, ambiguous Nicklausse; and Alan Held sings the roles of the four villains with unfailing authority (and intelligible French diction). The majesty and fire of James Levine's conducting make one forget the posthumous patch-ups made to Offenbach's incomplete score. (Dec. 16 at 8 and Dec. 19 at 1.) ♦ With John Keenan replacing Levine. (Dec. 23 and Dec. 26 at 8.) ♦ When Richard Jones's startling new production of **"Hansel and Gretel"** (sung in English) first went up in 2007, the veteran English tenor Philip Lang-

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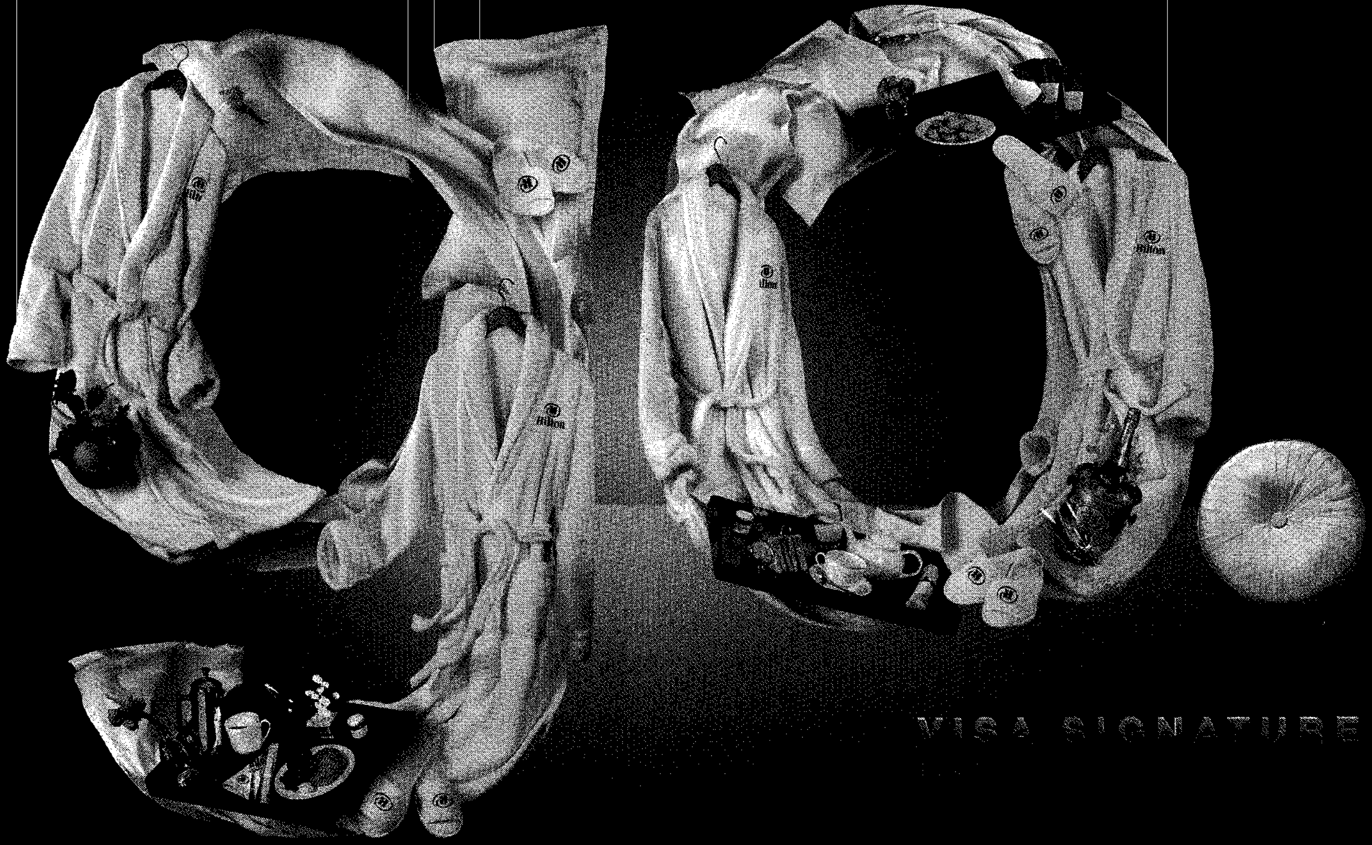

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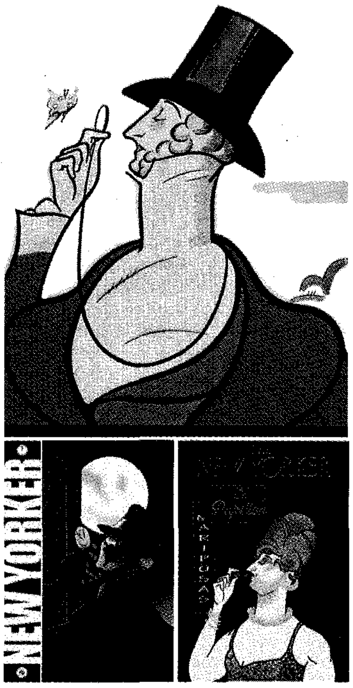

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ridge stole the show in the role of the Witch, offering crystalline diction even while stuffing his mouth with cake batter. He'll have two formidable colleagues, though, in Angelika Kirchschlager and Miah Persson, who take the title roles; Fabio Luisi conducts. (Dec. 17, Dec. 19, and Dec. 24 at 8 and Dec. 21 and Dec. 28 at 11 A.M.) ♦ The big news in the revival of Otto Schenk's production of **"Elektra"** is the Met début (in the title role) of the distinguished English soprano Susan Bullock, who has specialized in the heroines of Strauss and Wagner across Europe. The cast also features Deborah Voigt (in her signature role of Chrysothemis), Felicity Palmer, Wolfgang Schmidt, and Evgeny Nikitin; the excellent Fabio Luisi takes charge of the orchestra. (Dec. 18, Dec. 22, and Dec. 29 at 8 and Dec. 26 at 1.)

"STIFTER'S DINGE"
Heiner Goebbels, the composer-arranger-director who has created some of the most intriguing theatrical works of the last decade, is back in New York. The vast Drill Hall of the Park Avenue Armory will house the latest of his creations, "Stifter's Things," a "no-man show" that employs a large, machine-like set (featuring five player pianos) to explore the ideas of Adalbert Stifter, a Romantic-era Austrian novelist whose work anticipated the modern environmentalist movement. Goebbels's music mixes with excerpts from classical and jazz works and folk music from South America and Papua New Guinea. (Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-721-6500. Dec. 16-17 at 8; Dec. 18 at 7 and 10; Dec. 19 at 3, 7, and 10; and Dec. 20 at 2.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "CONTACT!"
An important new chapter for New York's flagship orchestra opens with the inaugural concerts of its new contemporary-music series, chamber-orchestra programs under the baton of the composer-in-residence, Magnus Lindberg. The first program—offered first at Symphony Space, then at the Metropolitan Museum—features works by Arlene Sierra, Lei Liang, Marc-André Dalbavie, and Arthur Kampela, all world premières. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 17 at 8. ♦ Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Dec. 19 at 7.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
James Levine—with a favorite singer, the mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe—conducts his sumptuous ensemble in Elgar's "Sea Pictures" and Mahler's Symphony No. 5. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 20 at 3.)

NEW YORK STRING ORCHESTRA
Carnegie Hall's proud holiday tradition, a festive gathering of young virtuosos under the command of Jaime Laredo. Dec. 24 at 7: On Christmas Eve, the Orion String Quartet joins the group in Elgar's Introduction and Allegro, followed by Bach's Concerto for Three Violins with the solo honors taken by Cho-Liang Lin, Kyoko Takezawa, and Bella Hristova; Mozart's "Prague" Symphony ends the program. ♦ Dec. 28 at 8: Peter Serkin collaborates with the group in Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor on a program that also features Vaughan Williams's Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. (212-247-7800.)

RECITALS

"CHAMBER MUSIC AT THE 92ND STREET Y"
The oboist Maurice Bourgue is the guest in this occasional series' latest concert (also featuring such regulars as the violinist Jaime Laredo, the cellist Sharon Robinson, and the clarinettist Alexander Fiterstein), a celebration of French music that includes pieces by Couperin, Debussy, Ravel (the Sonata for Violin and Cello), and Poulenc (the Sonata for Oboe and Piano). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Dec. 15 at 2 and Dec. 16 at 8.)

"THANK YOU, NADIA"
In a piquant tribute to the great French pedagogue Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), students at the Manhattan School of Music perform works by several of her prominent American pupils, such

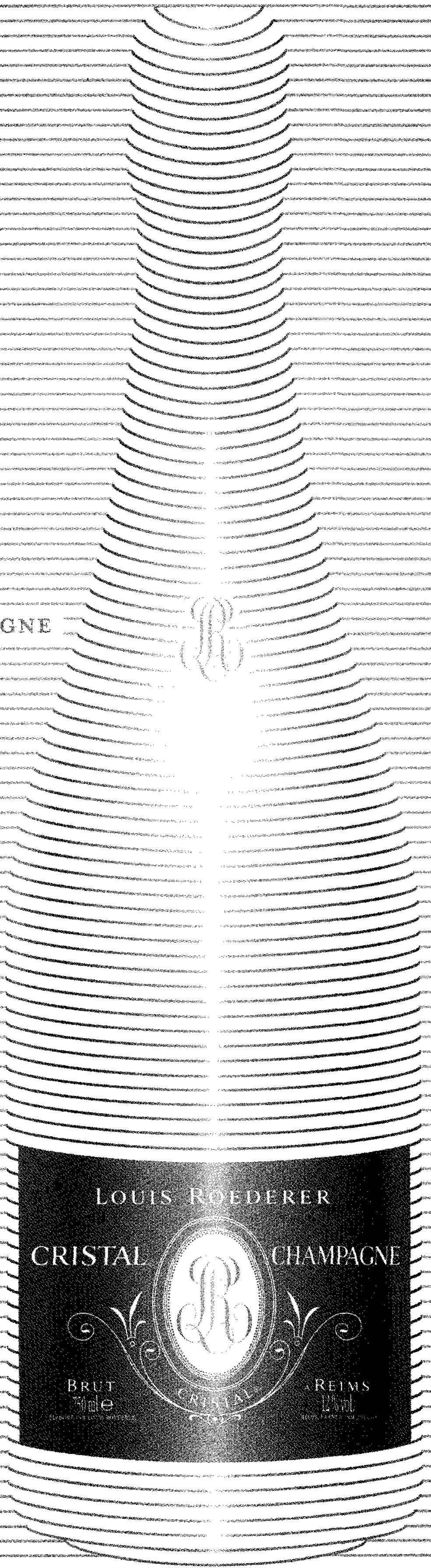
MARKO TURUNEN

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE
MICHAEL'S

808 Columbus Ave. 212-865-0813—New York is rich in culture, cuisine, and commerce. The suburbs have parking spots and fast food, and they also have Michael's, the largest arts-and-crafts supply chain in North America. But as of October, New York became the first metropolis in the Northeast to welcome this emporium of crafting; the fourteen-thousand-square-foot space on the Upper West Side offers forty thousand different kinds of D.I.Y. doodads. Your child will want twenty thousand of them. Did I say want? I meant urgently, insistently require. "We. Need. Some. Ribbon," a very small boy said to his mother, eyeing a display of oversized sparkly bows that looked as if they were made of sandpaper ($12.99). His mother asked why. "Because we don't have any," he said. "Mom, can I get these?" said a girl, around eight, holding up a small bag of flat opalescent stones ($2.99). "Remember I had a collection at Grandma Sue's? Please? I'll keep them at Grandma Sue's," she promised.

Here is a sliver of the rest of Michael's merchandise: a large assortment of ornamental wiggle eyes (some with eyelashes, $9.99 for a bag of five hundred); candle warmers ("the safe way to enjoy the fragrance of your scented candles," without matches, fire, or smoke, $4.99); bags of Buffalo Snow—plastic foamy stuff you could probably use to create snowy scenes of Rochester, too ($4.99); bridal veils ($14.99); candy-making funnels ($4.99); E.Z. Bowmakers—as seen on TV ($14.99); and, of course, beads, pipe cleaners, and glitter. For the crafty, Michael's can provide hours of fun, and hours and hours of cleanup. That is, if you can find your child. Overheard in the store's voluminous picture-frame department: "Sophia, I'm leaving you, wherever you are."

—Patricia Marx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BRUT STRENGTH

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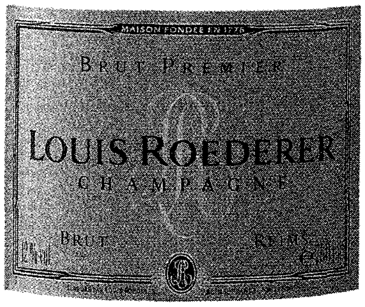
The prestige of Champagne Louis Roederer is a product of its scrupulous winemaking methods, which were centuries in the making. This passion can be tasted in every bottle of Brut Premier.

SECURING QUALITY

With a history stretching back to 1776, Champagne Louis Roederer has undoubtedly had to show persistence and resilience along the way: disruption of the winery by various conflicts in the early twentieth century—including the First World War, which alone destroyed more than half of the 300 acres acquired by Louis Roederer in the nineteenth century—led Léon Olry-Roederer, Louis' great-grandson, to expand the winery's estate in order to ensure continuity during any period of crisis. His foresight led to the creation of a brut multi vintage, a wine of several vintages with a consistent taste, regardless of the harvesting year. Today, this wine is called Brut Premier.

THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

Brut Premier Champagne is one of the most intricate of all Champagne wines to produce. The wine brings together seven different vintages in a blend composed mainly of Pinot Noir, with a touch of Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier. The additional inclusion of older reserve wines—wines that have matured in oak casks for several years—gives the complexity and roundness that characterizes Brut Premier. After blending and bottling, Brut Premier is aged at least three years and then an additional six months after disgorging. Brut Premier epitomizes the Louis Roederer style, combining the fruitiness and freshness of a youthful wine with the more complex characteristics of one that is fully mature.



A MATTER OF TASTE

The result of Louis Roederer's intricate process is a pleasurable wine, deliciously smooth and mature, that completes a casual dinner with friends as well as it creates a celebratory atmosphere at fine restaurants. With a pale golden color and a fine bead, Brut Premier offers a lively mix of aromas and flavors, producing an indulgence that is sought out as much for its consistent, fresh flavors as it is for its prestigious name. Each bottle provides a bountiful mixture of white and red fruits, such as apple, pear, blackberry, and cherry, as well as notes of hawthorn, toast, and almond. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, Champagne Louis Roederer's Head Winemaker, tastes in Brut Premier a triumph in contemporary winemaking built upon a rich past: "In the mouth, the wine has structure, richness, and length. It is a full, complex wine that is both modern and powerful, while remaining a great classic."

A PERFECT PAIRING

Brut Premier has something different for everyone, a fit for every occasion. Boasting freshness and finesse, this wine is commonly renowned as an apéritif. But many would argue, because of its structure, that the quality of the wine is best understood when paired with cuisine. Didier Elena and Philippe Jamesse, the two-star Michelin chef and the head sommelier, respectively, at the luxurious Château Les Crayères Hotel in Reims, France, suggest a number of delicious accompaniments to Brut Premier: langoustines or other shellfish served with honey and brioche; terrine of foie gras with almond jelly; and liver served with white fruit such as peaches and mirabelle plums. In addition, Brut Premier pairs well with white fish, ceviche, or even soufflé. With or without an accompanying dish, the multifaceted nature of Brut Premier makes every experience inimitable.

A TOAST TO PERFECTION

For centuries, Champagne Louis Roederer has been perfecting its meticulous techniques, ensuring that each bottle is unique—all the while maintaining the same high standards devised by Louis Roederer himself. As you open a bottle of Brut Premier, you experience a family's great legacy, their tireless commitment to high-quality craftsmanship, and—with that first sip—the artistry of Champagne.

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—RUTH REICHL

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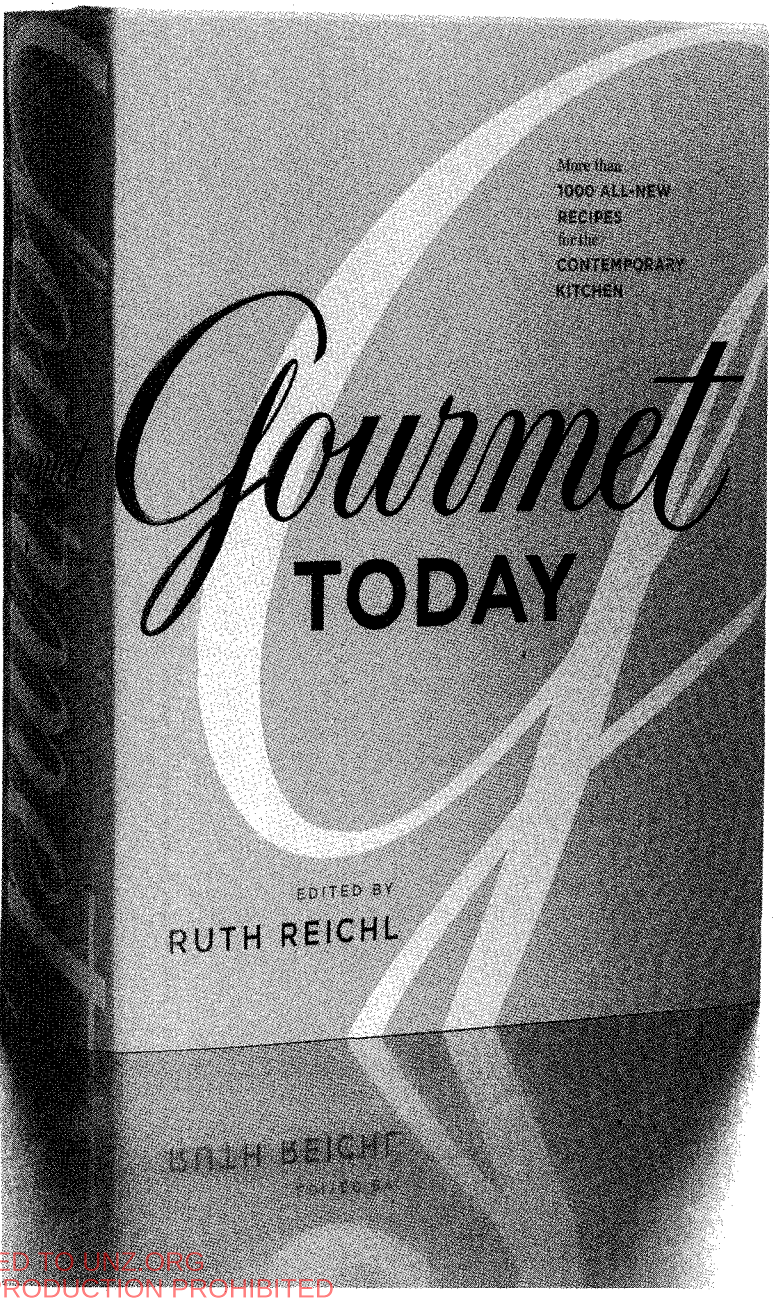
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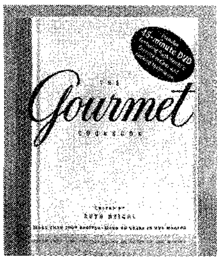
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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT WWW.GOURMETTODAYCOOKBOOK.COM as Copland ("Quiet City" and "Piano Variations"), Piston, Thomson, Blitzstein, and Philip Glass ("1+1"). (Greenfield Recital Hall, Broadway at 122nd St. Dec. 16 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC ENSEMBLE
Two experimentalist masters—John Cage and Phil Kline—will receive sterling advocacy from the ensemble's young musicians, performing such works as Cage's "Credo in Us" and Kline's "Exquisite Corpses." (The Tank, 354 W. 45th St. Dec. 17 at 9:30. Tickets at the door.)

"MM ARTISTS IN CONCERT"
It's hard—very hard—to find better chamber-music playing than at the cellist Edward Arron's series at the Metropolitan Museum, which always mixes new and unusual works in unexpected ways. The next concert, offered by Arron, the violinist Colin Jacobsen, the violist Nicholas Cords, and the pianists Jeremy Denk and Jeewon Park, features intimate arrangements of Mendelssohn's "Hebrides" and "Ruy Blas" Overtures, as well as works by Fauré (the Piano Quartet in C Minor) and Sofia Gubaidulina. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Dec. 18 at 7.)

MOVIES OPENING

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE SQUEAKQUEL
A comedy blending live action and animation, directed by Betty Thomas, with the voices of Jason Lee, Anna Faris, and Justin Long. Opening Dec. 23. (In wide release.)

AVATAR
James Cameron's 3-D science-fiction thriller, about a battle between humans and space creatures. Starring Sigourney Weaver, Michelle Rodriguez, and Giovanni Ribisi. Opening Dec. 16. (In wide release.)

CRAZY HEART
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Dec. 16. (In limited release.)

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS?
In this romantic comedy, an estranged New York couple who see a murder are placed in a witness-protection program and relocated to small-town Wyoming. Directed by Marc Lawrence; starring Sarah Jessica Parker and Hugh Grant. Opening Dec. 18. (In wide release.)

THE IMAGINARIUM OF DR. PARNASSUS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 25. (In wide release.)

IT'S COMPLICATED
Meryl Streep stars in this romantic comedy, directed by Nancy Meyers, as a divorcée who gets involved with her ex-husband (Alec Baldwin) and her architect (Steve Martin). Opening Dec. 25. (In wide release.)

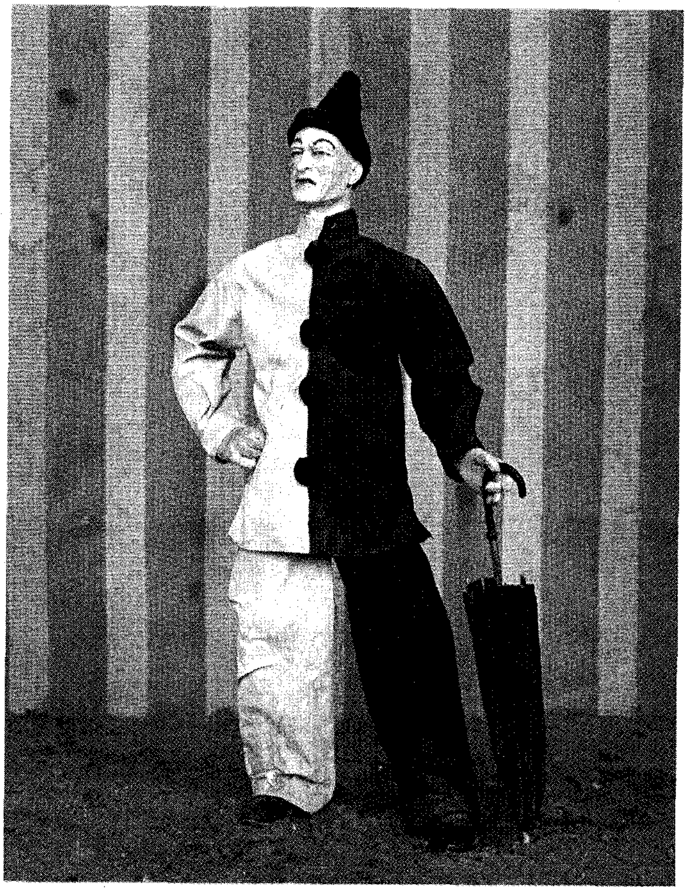
NINE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 18 (in limited release) and Dec. 25 (in wide release).

POLICE, ADJECTIVE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Dec. 23. (IFC Center.)

SHERLOCK HOLMES
Robert Downey, Jr., stars as the sleuth, and Jude Law co-stars as Dr. Watson. Directed by Guy Ritchie. Opening Dec. 25. (In wide release.)

A TOWN CALLED PANIC
An animated Western from Belgium, directed by Stéphane Aubier and Vincent Patar. Opening Dec. 16. (Film Forum.)

THE YOUNG VICTORIA
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 18. (In limited release.)


A photograph by Paolo Ventura, at Hasted Hunt Kraeutler.

NOW PLAYING

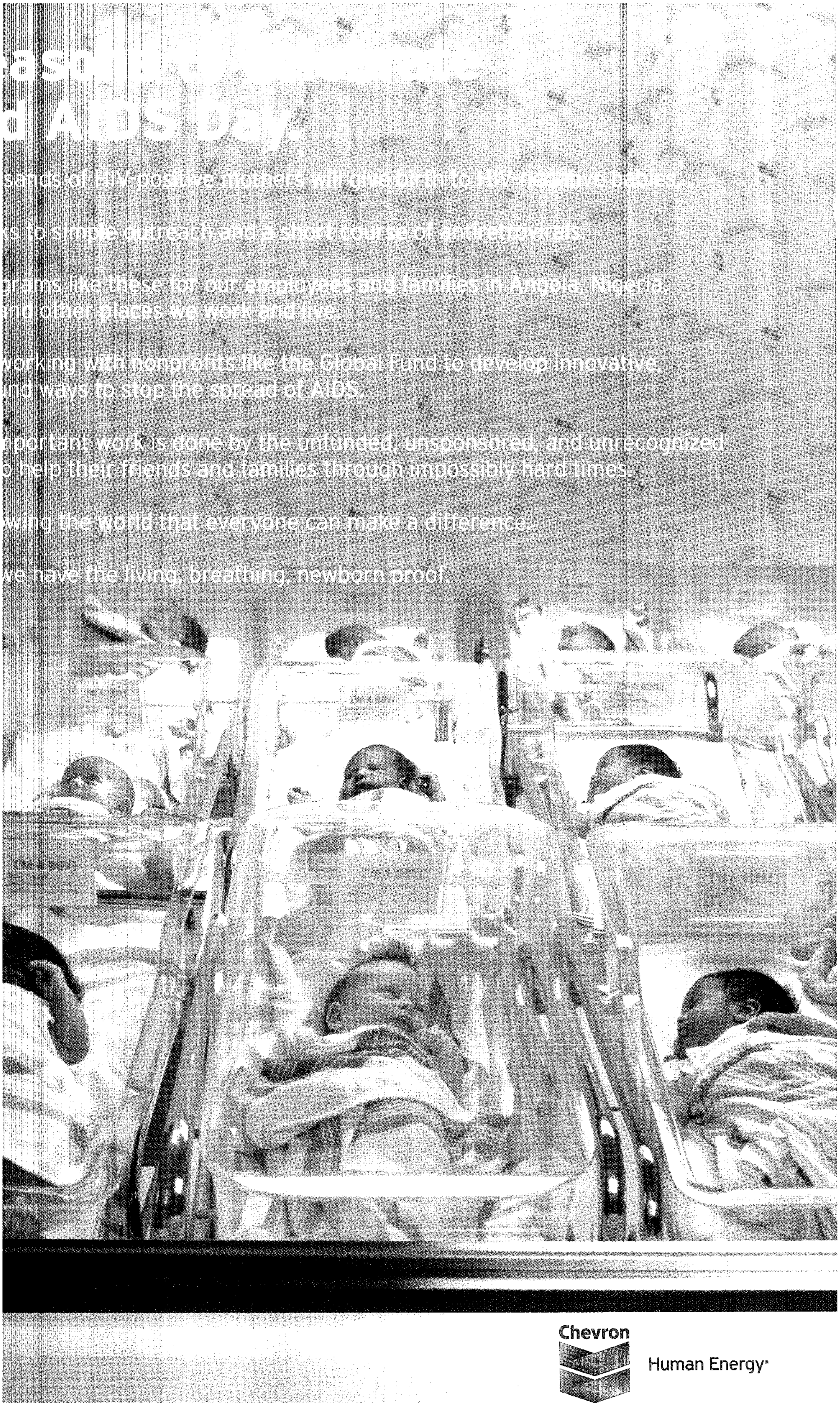
BAD LIEUTENANT: PORT OF CALL NEW ORLEANS
Snakes, in their sinister side-to-side way, swim through floodwaters, menacing a man held in an underground jail; alligators climb onto the freeway, causing automobiles to smash into one another; iguanas lounge on coffee tables, turning their loathsome eyes on the humans standing around them. In brief, Werner Herzog has checked into New Orleans and metaphysical despair is loosed upon Bourbon Street. It's a police procedural, sort of. A local drug kingpin is killing African-born interlopers in the white-powder trade; Detective Terence McDonagh (Nicolas Cage) tries to stop him while grabbing as much cocaine for himself as he can. Cage, his face screwed up with rage, one shoulder hitched higher than the other from a back injury, looks like Quasimodo without a bell rope to hang on to. Herzog has no interest in telling a story straight, and he lets his star run wild. The result is a mess, but it's far from boring. With Eva Mendes and Val Kilmer, who seem to be in another picture. Loosely based on Abel Ferrara's "Bad Lieutenant," from 1992, which Herzog denies ever having seen.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/30/09.) (In wide release.)

THE BLIND SIDE
The director and screenwriter John Lee Hancock's adaptation of Michael Lewis's nonfiction book is a multimillion-dollar cheeseburger—hard to resist, savory, comforting, and fundamentally unwholesome. The story, which takes place in Memphis, Tennessee, concerns the transformation of Michael Oher, a black teen-ager whose mother was a crack addict, from a street kid to an All-American college football player, thanks to the intervention of the wealthy white Tuohy family. Sandra Bullock gleefully tears into the role of Leigh Anne Tuohy, the fierce, salty, flamboyant young matriarch who takes Michael into her home and her family and becomes both his protector and his mentor, and Quintin Aaron brings a calm grace to the role of Michael. The movie is done with crispness, vigor, down-home humor, and an over-all tang of good feeling, but the pushing of buttons is extraordinarily calculated. Hancock's extremely selective view of Southern life offers a vision of anti-racism devoid of liberalism and presents young Michael as a living tabula rasa on which to project Tuohy-family values.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

BROKEN EMBRACES
The new Pedro Almodóvar film is a complicated business, with stories built inside one another and subplots leading off in furtive directions, like tunnels. We meet Harry Caine (Lluís Homar), a blind screenwriter and former director, who, when he is not undressing strangers in his apartment, is concocting screenplays with his assistant, Diego (Tamar Novas), or revisiting and recutting a movie that was taken out of his hands many years before. Much of the action is set in that time—the chronicle of a love affair between the director and his star (Penélope Cruz), the mistress of a jealous financier (José Luis Gómez). The two periods intersect, as so often in Almodóvar, via parents and children; Diego's mother and the financier's pushy son, it turns out, both have a substantial role to play. The clarity and sheen of the film are typically startling, and no living director is more expert in the weaving of matching details; this time, however, the lusts and disappointments of the characters come close to being smothered—and rendered strangely unmoving—by the surfeit of cleverness and cool. In Spanish.—*Anthony Lane* (11/23/09) (In wide release.)

BROTHERS
The new home-from-the-war movie, written by David Benioff and directed by Jim Sheridan, has been made with great devotion and sincerity, but nothing in it quite works. Sam Shepard is the dominating alcoholic father, a former marine who has tormented his two sons, turning one, Sam (Tobey Maguire), into a perfect high-achiever, both athlete and war hero, dutifully serving multiple tours in Afghanistan; and the other, Tommy (Jake Gyllenhaal), into a resentful, alcoholic, unemployable mess. When Sam gets captured by the Taliban, his wife, Grace (Natalie Portman), believing he's dead, leans toward Tommy, who pulls himself together and helps her raise her two kids. Then Sam returns. The script feels mechanical and obvious, and, except for Gyllenhaal, the movie is disastrously miscast. Maguire's Sam is humorless and odd-looking in his high-and-tight military haircut even before he goes away, and Portman, an elfin, improbably pretty thing, is unconvincing as a former cheerleader and young mother of two; they don't set off the dimmest of sparks in each other. You wait for Maguire to blow, and blow he does, shrieking and smashing things, in a display that seems more like pyrotechnics than acting.—*D.D.* (12/14/09) (In wide release.)

THE CAMERAMAN
It's a romantic charmer—the exhilarating first product of Buster Keaton's ultimately calamitous turn from independent production to studio work at M-G-M. Keaton plays a lowly tintype photographer who transforms himself into a newsreel ace to win over the office girl at the studio's New York documentary department. Keaton proves his genius at creating a parabola-like farce with what looks like a series of straight lines, whether he's racing cross-town to see his true love before she realizes that he's off the phone or keeping his tripod level during a tong war by evening it out with flying bullets. Under the direction of his old vaudeville buddy Edward M. Sedgwick, Jr., Keaton gets marvellous support from a cast that includes Marceline Day (the girl), Edward Brophy (a man in a cramped changing stall),



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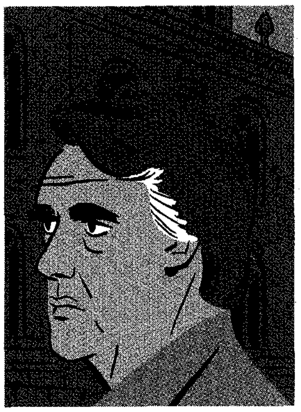
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
PAPP'S PEOPLE

The eminently readable "Free for All" has a highly theatrical momentum. Composed by Kenneth Turan and Joseph Papp, the late Public Theatre founder and impresario, the book is a forum for people's voices—some disgruntled—about their relationships with the Brooklyn-born director, who died in 1991, at the age of seventy. But his greatest achievement, the Public, is still going strong forty-two years after it was founded. Papp provided a home for writers ranging from Adrienne Kennedy and David Rabe to Ntozake Shange and Wallace Shawn. And by instituting color-blind casting, he championed brilliant stars such as Gloria Foster and Morgan Freeman, as well as Sam Waterston, Kathleen Widdoes, and Meryl Streep. Papp's genius was to harness the eclectic, difficult energy of the city and then sell it in productions that were often more rollicksome than the city itself. He was tough and imperious and sometimes wrong-headed, but he knew the theatre down to its blood—that is, the blood of its actors, writers, designers, and directors.



—*Hilton Als*

and Josephine (an amazing performing monkey). Released in 1928.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Dec. 28.)

CRAZY HEART
Jeff Bridges is Bad Blake, a well-travelled country singer and a barely functioning mess with a ratty beard and ponytail, a large belly, and a constant cigarette and glass of bourbon. He drives alone through vast stretches of the Southwest, drifting from saloon to bowling alley, performing with ragged pickup bands. He can still sing and play, a little, though he may not make it through a set without heaving in an alley. The rest of the time he lies on his back in a squalid motel. Bridges luxuriates in indolence, though, unlike the sublime Dude in "The Big Lebowski," Bad is not pleased with himself; there's an irritable pride churning around inside the man. Maggie Gyllenhaal, ardent and looking great, turns up as Jean Craddock, an arts journalist and single mother who penetrates the gloom of Bad's motel room for an interview. Jean wakes up the decrepit singer, but this is not a movie about miracles (the general theme of Bad's songs is "Everything is screwed up, but nothing can be done about it"). Nor is the movie quite a miracle itself. It has an easy, unforced rhythm, yet it needs more plot, more complication, more conflict. Written and directed by Scott Cooper, from Thomas Cobb's novel.—*D.D.* (12/14/09) (In limited release.)

FANTASTIC MR. FOX
For his stop-motion adaptation of Roald Dahl's book—about a fox who steals from three grotesque farmers, who go to absurd lengths to capture him as he leads his family and friends on increasingly desperate adventures in order to survive—the director Wes Anderson, co-writing the script with Noah Baumbach, greatly amplified the story and its emotional spectrum. Mr. and Mrs. Fox (voiced by George Clooney and Meryl Streep)—he's a journalist, she's an artist—bring to life a view of marriage that's as bittersweet and insightful as that of any recent live-action movie, and their idiosyncratic son (Jason Schwartzman) is set up in a touching rivalry with his cousin (Eric Anderson, the director's brother). Visually, the movie is a wonder, with its profusion of detail and exquisitely focussed "performances" by the figurines, whom Anderson frames in images as precisely composed as those featuring actors in his live-action work. The voice performances are sparkling and apt; the adventure plot is realized with a scenographic splendor that's as understated as it is dazzling, and is also invested with a surprising moral weight. Though the emotional realms—and the philosophical twists—that Anderson evokes are unusually sophisticated for a children's film, its exuberance is a universal tonic.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

INVICTUS
Clint Eastwood's stirring tribute to Nelson Mandela's moral grandeur and practical wisdom carries a whiff of the official—but the importance of this sort of virtuous public spectacle is itself the subject of the movie. The drama concerns Mandela's embrace, in 1995—soon after his election as South Africa's first post-apartheid President—of the country's rugby team (generally loved by whites and hated by blacks) when the country hosted the sport's World Cup tournament. Morgan Freeman brings a sublime dignity and self-mastery to the role of Mandela. As Francois Pienaar, the team captain to whom Mandela reaches out, Matt Damon lends good-humored smarts to the athlete's quiet rise to enlightenment. Eastwood's view of South Africa is sketchy but warmhearted and filled with fine-grained details. We mostly see Mandela at work, exerting power gracefully and compassionately, and there are no intimate revelations and no ambiguities or ironies. Rather, the movie takes its place in Eastwood's rigorous series of latter-day reflections on democratic values—here, the republic rests on the shoulders of a virtuous leader who understands the power of political symbolism and senses that a country unites not around its ideas but around its images. As such, it's also a defense of Eastwood's own popular artistry—and of the system that sustains it.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

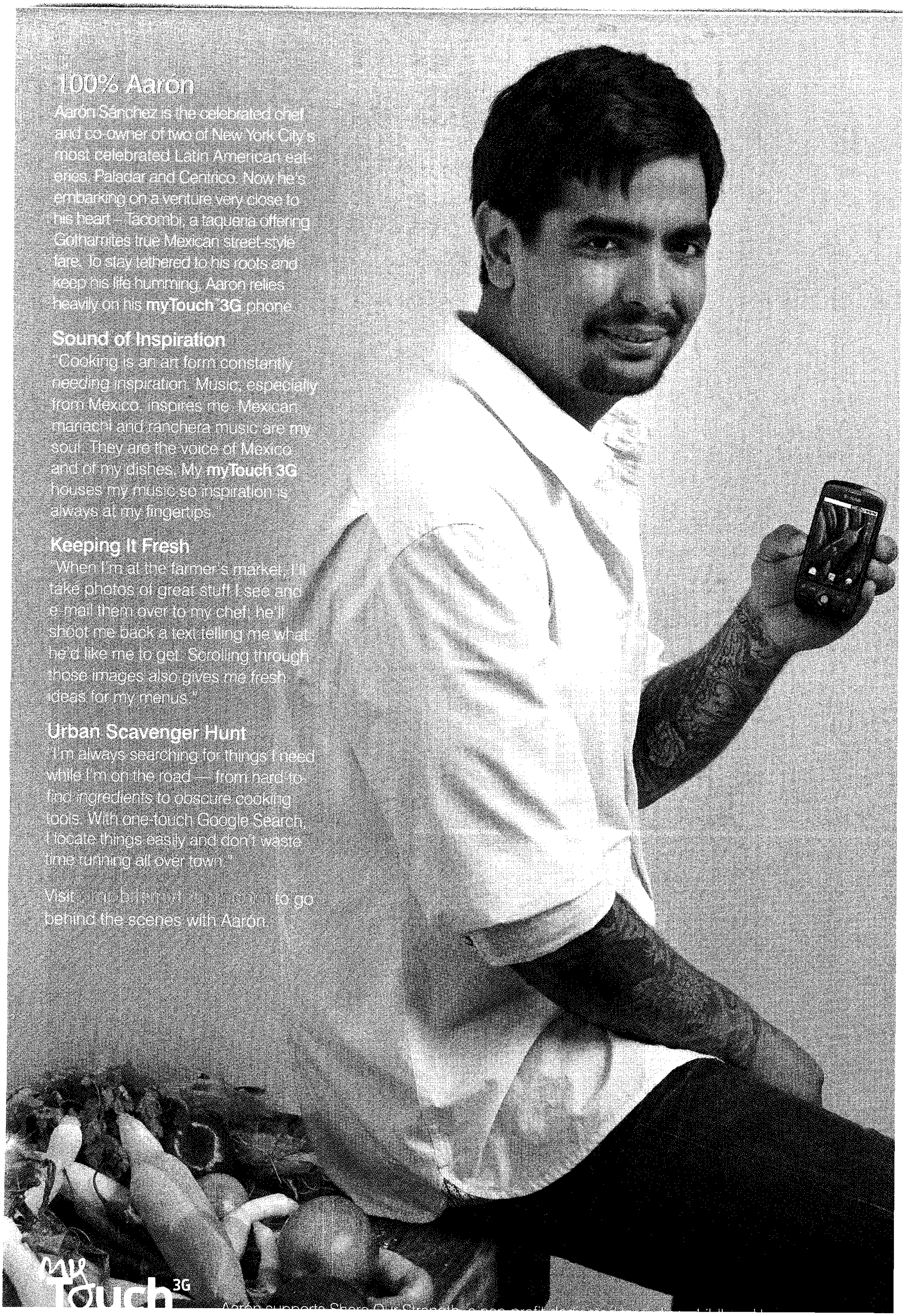
THE LAST STATION
Christopher Plummer is Leo Tolstoy in his eighties, imposing, stentorian, and almost alarmingly active; Helen Mirren, letting her age show yet still the most sexual actress on the screen, is Sofya, Tolstoy's wife of forty-eight years. The movie is raised to the level of greatness by its two acting demons, who go at each other full tilt and produce scenes of Shakespearean affection, chagrin, and rage. Shall Tolstoy leave the copyright and the enormous profits from his worldly masterpieces to Sofya and their children? Or shall he leave them to the "Russian people," as administered by the organization that propagates his late-in-life obsessions—a cultish neo-Christian, neo-socialist religion with its communes and schools, its advocacy of passive resistance to violence? The entire movie cries out that exalted, self-denying spirituality, however noble, is less sane than everyday love and sex and the full adoration of the sensuous world. With Paul Giamatti (overacting), as Chertkov, Tolstoy's fanatical disciple and administrator; and James McAvoy, whose vows of celibacy are no match for the flirtatious and intelligent fellow-Tolstoyan, Masha (Kerry Condon), who climbs into his bed. The exteriors were shot in a fine old house in Germany that resembles Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's estate. Michael Hoffman adapted Jay Parini's 1990 novel and directed with power and fluidity.—*D.D.* (12/14/09) (In limited release.)

THE LOVELY BONES
In the movie, as in Alice Sebold's 2002 best-seller, Susie (Saoirse Ronan), a fourteen-year-old girl, narrates, from Heaven or wherever it is, her own murder in 1973 at the hands of a neighborhood creep (Stanley Tucci); then she observes her father (Mark Wahlberg), mother (Rachel Weisz), and sister (Rose McIver) as they miserably cope with her death. But in Peter Jackson's adaptation, she is not merely present in their minds; she is there, prompting, warning, claiming a kiss from her handsome teen boyfriend. The book was brought off with considerable delicacy—it's really a detailed portrait of a suburban girl's life in the seventies. Literalized in the movie, the material is closer to a high-toned ghost story. Jackson intermingles family goings on with Susie's gossamer interventions, and some of the brushed-with-ether imagery comes close to the uncanny, but a lot of it is fussy-baroque, redundant, and undramatic. Jackson's Heaven has luscious hills and dales, gleaming lakes, and fields of waving grain. The picture has been fashioned as a holiday family entertainment about a grisly murder and grief, and it's more than a little sickening. Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens worked with Jackson on the screenplay. With Michael Imperioli.—*D.D.* (12/14/09) (In wide release.)

ME AND ORSON WELLES
A vivid view of Orson Welles (Christian McKay) at twenty-two, as seen through the eyes of a cocky teenager (Zac Efron) from New Jersey who bluffs his way into Welles's Mercury Theatre group in 1937. The plot is conventional: the young man gets initiated into sex and the many other fascinating and complicated rights of the grownup world—that is, he gets warmed up and then burned by people more experienced and ruthless than he is. But the details of the production that Welles stages (a modern-dress "Julius Caesar") are fascinating, and at the center of it stands the seductive and bombastic young genius, who applies his superlative theatrical instincts to an old classic. The British actor McKay has the necessary stature and vaunting authority, an easy way with a cigar, a sly smile, and a strong voice. "I am Orson Welles!" he thunders, when challenged. "I own the store." The picture has great spirit and considerable charm. It's about the giddiness of promise—the awakening of young talents to a moment when anything seems possible. With Claire Danes as Welles's friendly but opportunistic secretary. Directed by Richard Linklater.—*D.D.* (11/30/09) (In wide release.)

THE MESSENGER
Captain Tony Stone (Woody Harrelson), an Army lifer with a shaved head and a jaw like a stone jetty, and Staff Sergeant Will Montgomery (Ben Foster), a coiled, secretive Iraq-war hero, work together at what is surely the worst job in the armed forces: telling parents and spouses that a loved one has been killed in Iraq. There's an excruciatingly obvious but unavoidable irony here: the movie itself has taken on the unwelcome task of telling its audience what it doesn't want to hear—news of the way families get hit by an unending war. Yet it doesn't feel dutiful or

R. KIKUO JOHNSON



100% Aarón

Aaron Sánchez is the celebrated chef and co-owner of two of New York City's most celebrated Latin American eateries, Paladar and Centrico. Now he's embarking on a venture very close to his heart – Tacombi, a taqueria offering Gothamites true Mexican street-style fare. To stay tethered to his roots and keep his life humming, Aaron relies heavily on his **myTouch® 3G** phone.

Sound of Inspiration

"Cooking is an art form constantly needing inspiration. Music, especially from Mexico, inspires me. Mexican mariachi and ranchera music are my soul. They are the voice of Mexico and of my dishes. My **myTouch 3G** houses my music so inspiration is always at my fingertips."

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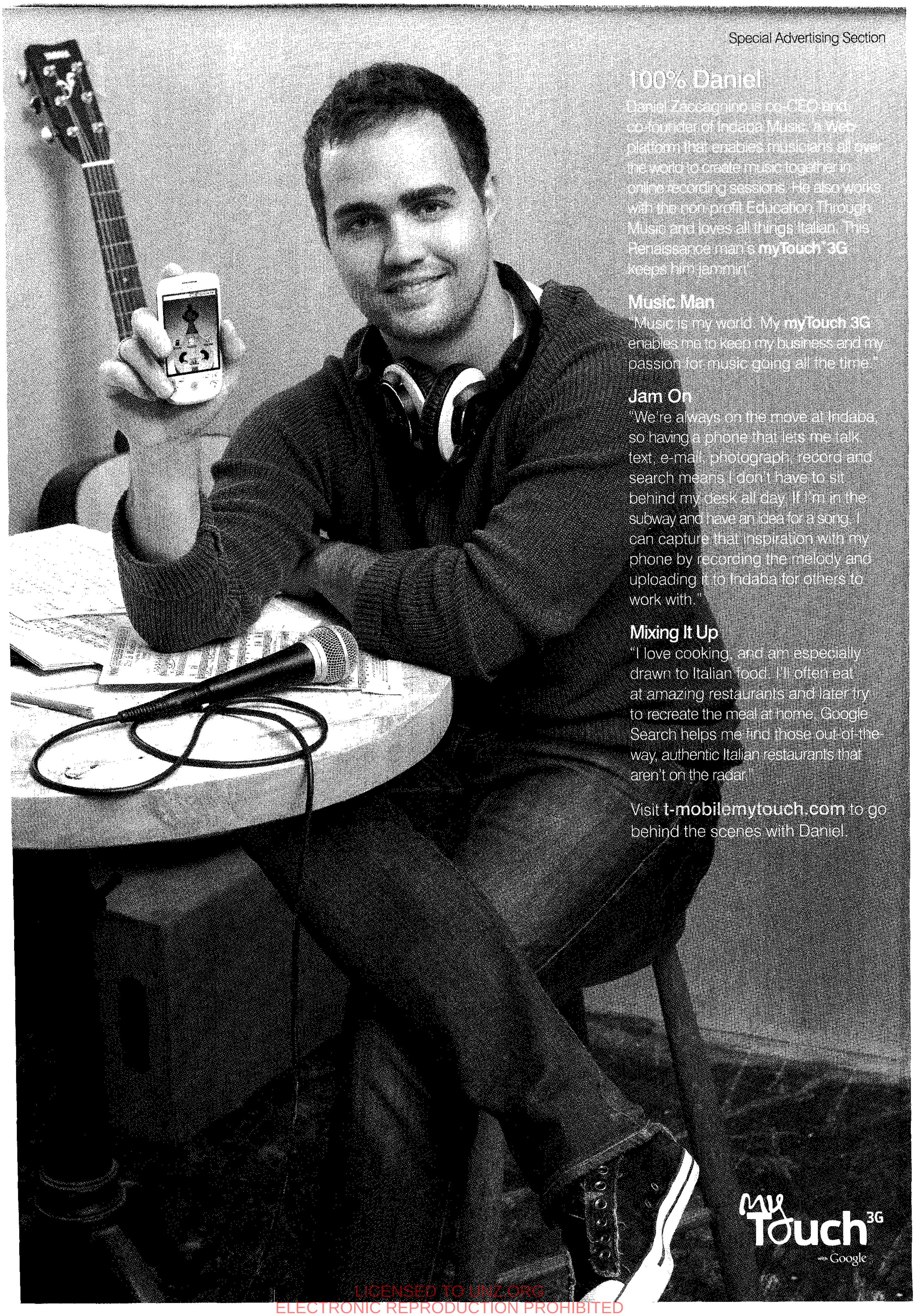

100% Daniel

Daniel Zaccagnino is co-CEO and co-founder of Indaba Music, a Web platform that enables musicians all over the world to create music together in online recording sessions. He also works with the non-profit Education Through Music and loves all things Italian. This Renaissance man's **myTouch 3G** keeps him jammin'.

Music Man

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Jam On

"We're always on the move at Indaba, so having a phone that lets me talk, text, e-mail, photograph, record and search means I don't have to sit behind my desk all day. If I'm in the subway and have an idea for a song, I can capture that inspiration with my phone by recording the melody and uploading it to Indaba for others to work with."

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"I love cooking, and am especially drawn to Italian food. I'll often eat at amazing restaurants and later try to recreate the meal at home. Google Search helps me find those out-of-the-way, authentic Italian restaurants that aren't on the radar."

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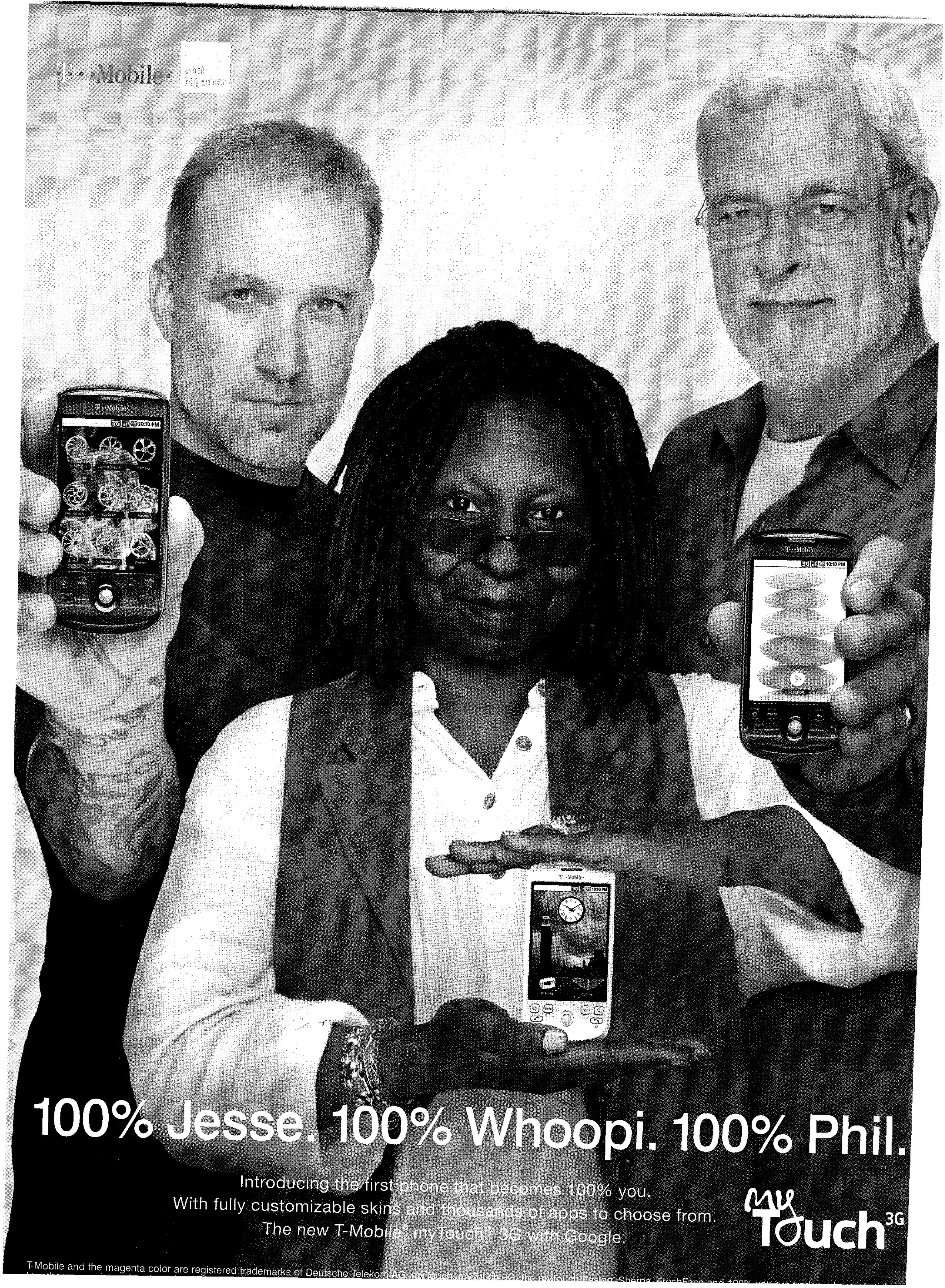
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solemn. This is a fully felt, morally alert, marvellously acted piece of work. Harrelson, with his eye-popping glare and acetylene voice, takes his usual wild-man character deep into melancholy and loneliness; the mesmerizing Foster, whose eyes seem to look inward and outward at the same time, eases the tense, guilty war hero back into life. The two form an uneasy, carousing friendship. The visits to the families are done with great delicacy, but great courage, too, and after a while we feel not like voyeurs but like participants. With a droopy, passive Samantha Morton—the movie's only weakness—as a widow whom the sergeant falls in love with. The director, Oren Moverman (a veteran of the Israeli Army), is clearly a whiz with actors.—*D.D.* (11/16/09) (In wide release.)

PRECIOUS: BASED ON THE NOVEL "PUSH" BY SAPPHIRE

How you respond to Lee Daniels's film is likely to depend on two variables: first, to what extent the preposterous title will get your tongue in a twist, and, second, whether or not you object to having extreme domestic abuse waved in front of your face. Gabourey Sidibe plays an obese, unhappy Harlem teen-ager named Clareece Jones; the task of the movie is to turn her nickname, Precious, from a wretched irony to a cause for pride—to surround her with people who will treasure her as she deserves. At the start, this seems a distant dream, since Precious is pregnant with her second child (by her own father) and trapped at home with her monster of a mother (Mo'Nique)—a withering portrait of indolence and wrath. (Might conservatives latch on to the film as a cautionary tale about an obsessive reliance on welfare? If so, that hardly seems to be what Daniels intended.) Precious finds hope in an alternative-school program, where she meets the beautiful and saintly—not to say implausible—figure of Blu Rain (Paula Patton). The tonal blend of damp-eyed fantasy and gruelling, closeup brutishness is at once morally suspect and highly effective in its manipulations; what rescues the story from the brink of the gothic is the poise and purpose of its leading performers—including Mariah Carey, no less, who is almost unrecognizable in her role as a social worker.—*A.L.* (11/9/09) (In wide release.)

POLICE, ADJECTIVE

Cristi (Dragos Bucur), a young plainclothes officer in the Romanian town of Vaslui, is assigned to follow a trio of teens, one of whom associates with a drug dealer. To Cristi's dismay, he is ordered to make a case against another kid in the group who is merely a user. The officer's struggle to resist his orders is the soul of this drama, directed by Corneliu Porumboiu, a quietly jolting dialectical and lexicographical masterwork. Porumboiu's images, all nouns and verbs, withhold inflection in order to highlight the moral weight of creating and interpreting information; his taut long takes maintain the tension of incisive scenes featuring debates about language. Cristi's wife, Anca (Irina Saulescu), is a literature teacher, and their dinnertime parsing of a pop song and of his grammar (with the dictates of the Romanian Academy cited as authority) sets the stage for the climactic showdown with his chief (Vlad Ivanov), which takes place over a dictionary. With a quietly scintillating depth, the movie ultimately reveals the odd title's chilling implications and casts over today's Romania dark shadows from its Soviet-dominated past. In Romanian.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)

RED CLIFF

The action master John Woo, after years of directing (mostly middling) American films, returns to China for this epic story of a legendary third-century battle between a powerful emperor-backed general and two competing warlords. For its American release, Woo cut in half what was originally a two-part, five-hour film, and there's not a wasted minute. Gorgeously shot (by Lu Yue and Zhang Li) and beautifully acted (by Tony Leung, Zhang Fengyi, and Chi-ling Lin, among others), the film spreads Kurosawa-like swordplay onto a David Lean canvas and comes away with startlingly imaginative battle scenes (including one in which thousands of white-shafted arrows are fired at a barge, turning it into a floating flower arrangement). The plot, with its unusual battle plans and political intrigues, may not always be easy to follow, but Woo delivers supremely entertaining warfare.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

REGENERATION

There is perhaps no cinematic view of slum life as shockingly squalid as the one on view in this 1915 drama, one of the first gangster films, made largely on location in New York. The director Raoul Walsh, who grew up in the city, infuses his first surviving feature with the raw street life of his youth and a colorful, disturbing array of broken-down, life-worn extras he recruited from saloons. The tale of an abused orphan's rise to gang leader takes a decisive turn when the gangster Owen Conway (Rockliffe Fellowes, a ringer for the young Brando) meets a frivolous socialite (Anna Q. Nilsson) who is slumming in a Bowery dive. The redemptive ending foretold in the title does little to dispel the air of grimness induced by the sight of cracked walls, ragged clothes, filthy tin buckets of beer, and ugly fistfights of a knockdown, drag-out inconclusiveness. Revelling in the cinema's power to set a vast scene in a single glance, Walsh gives the spare, schematic story a novelistic amplitude. Silent.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Dec. 16-18.)

RICKY

François Ozon's domestic fantasy, about an infant who sprouts wings and begins to fly, has the complexity of a television commercial and the moral of a greeting card. Katie (Alexandra Lamy), a factory worker and single mother who lives with her young daughter, Lisa (Mélusine Mayance), in a housing project, meets Paco (Sergi López), a Spanish immigrant, at work. He soon moves in with her, and she gets pregnant. Their newborn son (Arthur Peyret), the title character, is first a source of discord; then, of wonder; and, ultimately, of simplistically bittersweet wistfulness. Ozon's graphic compositions are eye-catching but trivial; his situations are undeveloped; his characters, unrealized; his satire, banal; his whimsy, forced. In French.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)

THE ROAD

It's hard to say how Cormac McCarthy's celebrated novel should have been done as a movie—or whether it should have been done at all. For most of the film, we watch Viggo Mortensen, as the Man, and Kodi Smit-McPhee, as the Boy, walk through a dichromatic gray-brown post-apocalyptic landscape, peopled only by a few survivors (some of them cannibals feasting on human captives). The grimly punitive monotony of the leafless, colorless, humorless production may fool some people into thinking it's art. With the golden Charlize Theron, as the Man's wife (seen in a flashback to better days), and Robert Duvall, as a bitter old coot waiting to die. Shot in a wrecked industrial landscape near Pittsburgh. Screenplay by Joe Penhall. Directed by John Hillcoat.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

A SINGLE MAN

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In limited release.)

THE TRIAL OF JOAN OF ARC

Deriving the script for this 1962 historical drama from the actual trial transcript and other contemporaneous documents, Robert Bresson depicts the moral and political power of language and sublimates it into matters of faith. His textual archeology reveals Joan's poetic depth and intellectual self-assurance, and the young actress he cast as the heroine and martyr, Florence Delay, has the steely eloquence and dialectical self-possession of a modern-day Sorbonne *pasionaria*. Bresson uses no close-ups or wide shots to film her debates with judges and jailers; he keeps heads and bodies together in the frame as if to show that the source of intellectual strength is literally visceral as well as inseparable from physical, real-world action. He also makes explicit the political context of the showdown: the demand by British overlords that French judges in their fealty ensure Joan's condemnation and execution. It's reminiscent of the Occupation of France by Germany in the Second World War, and Joan's visionary defiance recalls the conflicting faiths that had galvanized the French resistance—Catholic and Communist. In French and English.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Dec. 17-18.)

THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON

The second installment in the "Twilight" series is a glacially paced exercise in longing that comes alive only when the gorgeous actors Robert Pattinson and Taylor Lautner strut their stuff. This time, the chaste

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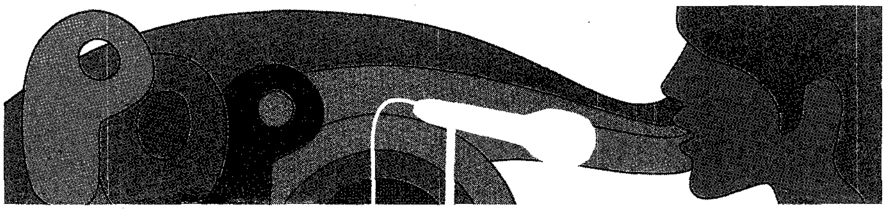
romance of Bella (Kristen Stewart) with the brooding vampire Edward (Pattinson) gets sidelined when he goes away in order to protect her from his clan. She's then befriended by Jacob (Lautner), a hunky werewolf who also longs for her. The film meanders while Bella wrestles with her affections and the script runs through its vampire plotlines. The intrigue is in the competing moods that result as frustrated hormonal desire leads to let's-fight-over-the-girl antics. It's supremely unreal, a Harlequin romance for the goth set.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)


KARI MODEN

POP NOTES
HERE IT IS

Since his death, in 2006, James Brown has become one of the most repackaged artists in history, thanks in no small part to an ambitious series of double-disk sets released by Hip-O Select. The sets have looked at Brown's full singles catalogue, year by year; the latest installment, **"The Singles, Volume Eight: 1972-73,"** finds soul music (and the Godfather of it) at a crossroads. The standard-bearers of the sixties like Motown and Stax were in decline; for every star who adapted to the changing social mood (Curtis Mayfield, Marvin Gaye), there were dozens who fell by the wayside. And funk, which Brown had helped pioneer, had rapidly ramified, becoming far more celebratory on the one hand (the dance music that would soon become disco) and far more psychedelic on the other (bands like Funkadelic were aggressively injecting hard rock into the mix). Brown was still a colossus, but a colossus stands still, and the time required him to move a bit. This meant a number of things, all at once. On "There It Is," released in the summer of 1972, Brown mixed up-tempo funk and socially conscious sermons like "King Heroin." Five months later, he was back with the sprawling double album "Get on the Good Foot," which included remakes of old hits alongside newer fare like the title track and "I Got a Bag of My Own." The following year, Brown tried to conquer blaxploitation, turning out a pair of soundtracks, "Black Caesar" and "Slaughter's Big Rip-Off," that highlighted the instrumental interplay of his backing band, the J.B.'s, led by the trombonist Fred Wesley. In fact, as this set demonstrates convincingly, much of Brown's finest material from this period was released under the J.B.'s name, including the taut "Doing It to Death," "Giving Up Food for Funk," and the masterfully titled "You Can Have Watergate, Just Gimme Some Bucks and I'll Be Straight" (Brown, of course, was a famous Nixon supporter). Most of these songs (like the strange funk version of the Beatles' "Something") aren't a central part of Brown's canon; they're footnotes, but good footnotes.

—*Ben Greenman*

UP IN THE AIR
At long last, George Clooney meets his match. There have been previous attempts to pair him in romantic comedies, such as "Intolerable Cruelty," but, from the moment when, playing a business traveller named Ryan Bingham, he picks up Alex Goran (Vera Farmiga) in a bar, we realize that a battle of equals has commenced. Bingham fires people for a living (the director, Jason Reitman, could not have timed his movie better), while most of his own living is done on planes and in hotel rooms; he is a rootless soul who mistakes his emptiness for freedom, and it takes the efforts of Alex, his occasional lover, and of Natalie (Anna Kendrick), his perky new colleague, to school him in the error of his ways. Reitman's film both satisfies and dismays; the one-liners fly back and forth, but, if you happen to look down, there are oceans of hopelessness below. With Jason Bateman as Bingham's cynical boss.—*A.L.* (12/7/09) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

A CHRISTMAS CAROL: In wide release. **LA DANSE:** In limited release. **OLD DOGS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Beyond the Absurd: Ronald Tavel and Andy Warhol." All films are directed by Warhol. Dec. 16 at 7: "Harlot" (1964). ♦ Dec. 16 at 8:45: "The Life of Juanita Castro" (1965). ♦ Dec. 17 at 7: "The Chelsea Girls" (1966). ♦ Special screenings. Dec. 17-18 at 7:30: "The Trial of Joan of Arc" (†). The Dec. 17 screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with the writer Tony Pipolo. ♦ "Best of Anthology Film Archives 2009." Dec. 18 at 8: Films by Alfred Leslie, including "A Stranger Calls at Midnight" (2008). ♦ Dec. 19 at 6:30: Short-film program, including "Cargo of Lure" (1974, J. Hoberman). ♦ Dec. 19 at 8:30: Films by James Nares, including "Suicide? No, Murder" (1971). ♦ Dec. 20 at 6:30: Films by Beryl Sokoloff, including "Chromochromo" (undated). ♦ Dec. 20 at 8:30: "My Girlfriend's Wedding" (1969, Jim McBride) and "Pictures from Life's Other Side" (1971, McBride). ♦ Dec. 21 at 8: Short films, including "Born to Film" (1982, Danny Lyon). ♦ Dec. 22 at 8: "The Black Banana" (1976, Ben Hayeem). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Dec. 19 at 6: "Symphonie Diagonale" (1924, Viking Eggeling; silent) and "Rien Que les Heures" (1928, Alberto Cavalcanti; silent). ♦ Dec. 19 at 7:30: "The Flicker" (1966, Tony Conrad; silent) and "Blonde Cobra" (1959-63, Ken Jacobs and Bob Fleischner).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"The Next Director." Dec. 16 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Rebels of the Neon God" (1992, Tsai Ming-liang; in Mandarin). ♦ Dec. 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Happy Together" (1997, Wong Kar-wai; in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish). ♦ In revival. Dec. 18 and Dec. 20 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15; Dec 19 at 6:50 and 9:15; and Dec. 21-24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "His Girl Friday" (1940, Howard Hawks).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—"Madcap Manhattan." Dec. 16 at 1:30, 5:15, and 9:30: "Where's Poppa?" (1970, Carl Reiner). ♦ Dec. 16 at 3:10 and 7: "Little Murders" (1971, Alan Arkin). ♦ Dec. 17 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "It Should Happen to You" (1954, George Cukor). ♦ Dec. 17 at 2:45, 6:15, and 10: "The Solid Gold Cadillac" (1956, Richard Quine). ♦ Dec. 18-19 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "The Mad Miss Manton" (1938, Leigh Jason). ♦ Dec. 18-19 at 2:35, 6:15, and 9:55: "Ball of Fire" (1942, Howard Hawks). ♦ Dec. 20 at 1, 5:05, and 9:10 and Dec. 21 at 1 and 5:05: "Adam's Rib" (1949, George Cukor). ♦ Dec. 20 at 2:55 and 7:00 and Dec. 21 at 2:55: "Woman of the Year" (1942, George Stevens). ♦ Dec. 21 at 7 and 10:05: "She Couldn't Take It" (1935, Tay Garnett). ♦ Dec. 21 at 8:30: "Girls About Town" (1931, George Cukor). ♦ Dec. 22 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "The King of Comedy" (1983, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Dec. 23-24 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "The Thin Man" (1934, W. S. Van Dyke). ♦ Dec. 23-24 at 2:50, 6:30, and 10:10: "My Man Godfrey" (1936, Gregory LaCava). ♦ Dec. 25-26 at 1, 4:15, and 7:30: "Miracle on 34th Street" (1947, George Seaton). ♦ Dec. 25-26 at 2:50, 6:05, and 9:20: "Christmas in July" (1940, Preston Sturges). ♦ Dec. 27 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50 and Dec. 28 at 1: "Broadway Danny Rose" (1984, Woody Allen). ♦ Dec. 27 at 2:40, 6:05, and 9:30 and Dec. 28 at 2:40: "The Producers" (1968, Mel Brooks). ♦ Dec. 28 at 4:30 and 8: "The Cameraman" (†). ♦ Dec. 28 at 6:15 and 9:30: "Speedy" (1928, Ted Wilde; silent). ♦ Dec. 29 at 1:30 and 6:15: "Sweet Charity" (1969, Bob Fosse). ♦ Dec. 29 at 4:10 and 9: "My Sister Eileen" (1955, Richard Quine). ♦ In revival. Dec. 18-29 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "The Third Man" (1949, Carol Reed).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"Charlie for the Holidays." Dec. 21 and Dec. 23 at 1:30, 5:10, and 8:50 and Dec. 22 at 3:20 and 7: "City Lights" (1931, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Dec. 21 and Dec. 23 at 3:20 and 7 and Dec. 22 at 1:30, 5:10, and 8:50: "Modern Times" (1936, Chaplin). ♦ "Back by Popular Demand." Dec. 26 at 1 and Dec. 29 at 6:15: "The Sicilian Girl" (2008, Marco Amenta; in Italian). ♦ Dec. 26 at 3:15 and Dec. 29 at 1:30: "Macbeth" (1948, Orson Welles). ♦ Dec. 26 at 5:40 and Dec. 28 at 6: "Pather Panchali" (1955, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali). ♦ Dec. 26 at 8 and Dec. 27 at 1: "Bitter Rice" (1949, Giuseppe De Santis; in Italian). ♦ Dec. 27 at 3:10 and Dec. 28 at 1: "Citizen Havel" (2008, Pavel Koutecký and Miroslav Janek; in Czech). ♦ Dec. 27 at 5:30 and Dec. 29 at 4 and 8:30: "Music on Hold" (2009, Hernán A. Goldfrid; in Spanish). ♦ Dec. 27 at 7:45 and Dec. 30 at 3:30: "The Hurt Locker" (2008, Kathryn Bigelow). ♦ Dec. 28 at 3:30 and 8:30: "Revanche" (2008, Götz Spielmann; in German).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of François Truffaut. Dec. 22 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "The Last Metro" (1980; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Dec. 18-29 (call for showtimes): "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946, Frank Capra). ♦ Dec. 25-31 (call for showtimes): "The Great Dictator" (1940, Charles Chaplin). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Dec. 18-19: "The Shining" (1980, Stanley Kubrick). ♦ Dec. 24-26: "Donnie Darko" (2001, Richard Kelly).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"An Auteurist History of Film." Dec. 16-18 at 1:30: "Regeneration" (†) and "The Blue Bird" (1918, Maurice Tourneur; silent). ♦ "Best Years: Going to the Movies, 1945-46." Dec. 17 at 4:30 and Dec. 28 at 7: "Where Are Your Children?" (1944, William Nigh) and "Hare Conditioned" (1954, Chuck Jones). The Dec. 28 screening will be introduced by the film historian Mirella Jona Affron. ♦ Dec. 19 at 5:45: "The Dark Corner" (1946, Henry Hathaway). ♦ Dec. 20-21 at 2: "They Were Sisters" (1945, Arthur Crabtree). ♦ Dec. 23 at 4: "The Battle of the Rails" (1945, René Clément; in French). ♦ "Johnny Mercer Centenary Screening." Dec. 18 at 7: "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" (1954, Stanley Donen). ♦ The films of Jacques Tati. Except where noted, all films are in French. Dec. 18 at 8 and Dec. 29 at 4: "Playtime" (1967; in French and English). ♦ Dec. 19 at 5 and Dec. 26 at 7:30: "Jour de Fête" (1949) and "The School for Postmen" (1947). ♦ Dec. 19 at 8 and Dec. 24 at 4:30: "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" (1953). ♦ Dec. 20 at 2:30 and Dec. 23 at 8: "Mon Oncle" (1958). ♦ Dec. 26 at 4 and Dec. 29 at 1:30: "Parade" (1974) and "Night Class" (1966). ♦ Dec. 27 at 2: "Traffic" (1971). ♦ "Nuts and Bolts: Machine

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Made Man." Dec. 19 at 1: "L'Inhumaine" (1924, Marcel L'Herbier; silent). ♦ Dec. 19 at 4: "Die Puppe" (1919, Ernst Lubitsch; silent). ♦ Dec. 23 at 7: "Metropolis" (1926, Fritz Lang; silent). ♦ Dec. 24 at 4: "Computer Free-for-All" (1969, Kengo Furusawa; in Japanese). ♦ Dec. 28 at 4: "The Golem" (1920, Paul Wegener and Carl Boese; silent).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." Dec. 18 at 9:30: "In a Lonely Place" (1950, Nicholas Ray), introduced by Ken Brown.

READINGS AND TALKS

ANDREW MOTION
Great Britain's former poet laureate reads from his work on Dec. 15 at 7 at 192 Books. (192 Tenth Ave., between 21st and 22nd Sts. For reservations, which are required, call 212-255-4022.) The following night at 7, he joins Alice Quinn, the executive director of the Poetry Society of America, for a reading and a talk at the National Arts Club. (15 Gramercy Park S. For more information, call 212-254-9628.)

STRAND BOOKSTORE
The New York classical-music radio hosts Annie Bergen, Clayelle Dalferes, Elliott Forrest, Kevin Gordon, and Jeff Spurgeon read Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." (Broadway at 12th St. No tickets necessary. Dec. 17 at 6.)

KGB BAR
David Henry Sterry, the co-editor of "Hos, Hookers, Call Girls, and Rent Boys: Professionals Writing on Life, Love, Money, and Sex," joins the contributors Audacia Ray, Hawk Kinkaid, and Zoe Hansen for a reading from the anthology. (85 E. 4th St. 212-505-3360. Dec. 20 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

COOKIE TAKEDOWN
This home-baking competition might seem like something of a stretch for its founder, Matt Timms, whose bread-and-butter events, as it were, generally concentrate on hardier fair. Home-cooked chili contests are Timms's main thing, but his passion for a calorie-heavy good time knows no bounds. He's organized bacon, fondue, salsa, and curry Takedowns, so why not one for cookies? He did it last year, and it was such a success that he's doing it again, in a larger venue. More than thirty competitors are expected, and they'll each be bringing cookies for the two hundred anticipated attendees. Those who pay to enter get to sample as many cookies as they can stomach, and they vote on the best entries. There's only one rule for the bakers: "It has to come out of an oven," Timms says. "Last year, my old babysitter showed up with bacon-and-blue-cheese cookies." (The Bell House, 149 7th St., between Second and Third Aves., Brooklyn. 718-643-6510. Dec. 20 at 6:30.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Bonhams is in a retro party mood, offering colorful jewelry, bijouterie, and fine spirits worthy of the great Hollywood tycoons. On Dec. 16, the house breaks out a whimsical collection of jewelry from the nineteen-thirties and forties, fashioned from Bakelite, including brooches in all sorts of funny shapes, from a lobster to a cluster of cherries, perfect for a would-be Auntie Mame. The following day (Dec. 17) features the sale of a private collection of whiskeys, mainly Scotch, many of which date from the nineteen-twenties through the nineteen-forties. (580 Madison Ave. 212-644-9001.) ♦ **Sotheby's** closes out the season with a series of decorative-arts sales, beginning with a selection of carpets and textiles from the Caucasus, Anatolia, Persia, Central Asia, India, China, and Europe (Dec. 16) and ending with an auction of objects by the Tiffany Studios (Dec. 17), including a beautiful "Pebble" window, crafted from luminescent pebbles in rich browns and honey hues. But the highlight of the week is an auction (Dec. 17) devoted to a private collection of art and decorations from the inner sanctum of the New York party planner and floral designer Robert Isabell, who put together Jacqueline Onassis's funeral and her daughter Caroline's wedding, and who died earlier this year. This magical place in Greenwich Village was a private paradise, filled with orchids and ivy, as well as works from the American studio movement and French mid-century design pieces, created by Jean Prouvé, Charlotte Perriand, and Serge Mouille, among others. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Toulouse-Lautrec and Alphonse Mucha are the stars of **Swann's** annual auction of rare Art Nouveau posters on Dec. 16, which includes such oft-reproduced images as Lautrec's "Jane Avril," an exuberant depiction of the eponymous dancer swinging her petticoats at the Jardin de Paris, and Mucha's advertisement for Job rolling papers, in which the model's auburn hair becomes entwined in the scrolling smoke of her seductively held cigarette. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.) ♦ **Christie's** end-of-season "Interiors" sale (Dec. 16-17) runs the gamut from an old-fashioned diamond tiara fit for a fairy godmother to a pretty Pissarro watercolor, as well as the usual carpets, mirrors, and furniture. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

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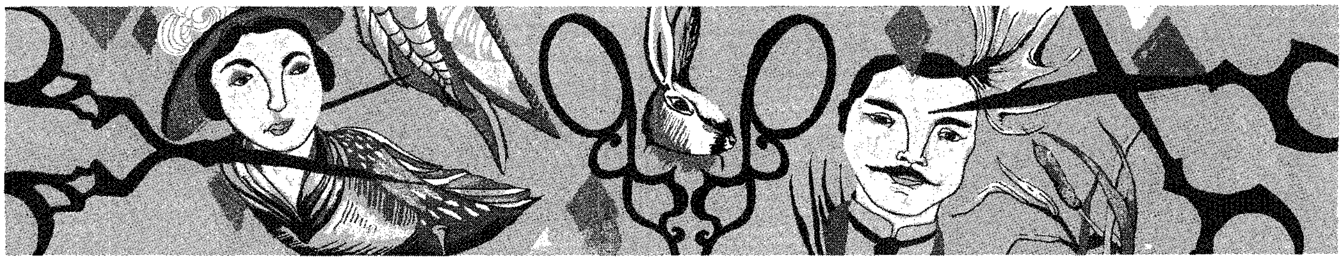

KIM ROSEN

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
FUNNY HA-HA
Jan. 2

Victor Garber stars in Noël Coward's 1939 farce "Present Laughter," as Garry Essendine, a British theatre actor preparing for a trip to Africa. Nicholas Martin directs for the Roundabout, at the American Airlines Theatre. (212-719-1300.)

MOVIES
OUT OF AUSTRIA
Jan. 15-21

Before there was "Food, Inc.," there was the Austrian documentary filmmaker Nikolaus Geyrhalter's "Our Daily Bread," which took an unflinching look at the industrial diet of modern Europe. It's in the retrospective of Geyrhalter's work at Anthology Film Archives, along with "Pripyat," about Chernobyl, and a première of his new film, "7915 KM," about life along the route of the Dakar Rally. (212-505-5181.)

NIGHT LIFE
BLOOD BROTHERS
Jan. 17-19

Vampire Weekend, the band that emerged from Columbia University a few years ago with a catchy take on global rhythms, comes to the United Palace, Webster Hall, and Bowery Ballroom following the release of its sophomore album, "Contra." (800-745-3000.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
UNDER THE RADAR
Jan. 29

Leon Botstein's programs at Lincoln Center with the American Symphony Orchestra range from the eccentric to the heroic. His next is in the latter category: a concert of music by Henry Cowell (1897-1965), one of the most influential—and underperformed—of the twentieth-century American masters. (212-868-9276.)

ART
WHAT A CUTUP
Feb. 2-May 9

Decades before the avant-garde—from Cubists to Constructivists—hit on the technique of collage, Victorian ladies were taking scissors to photographs and then embellishing the whimsical results with watercolor. The Met exhibits some fifty examples of this technique in "Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage." (212-535-7710.)

"Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage," at the Met.

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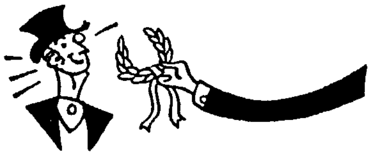
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

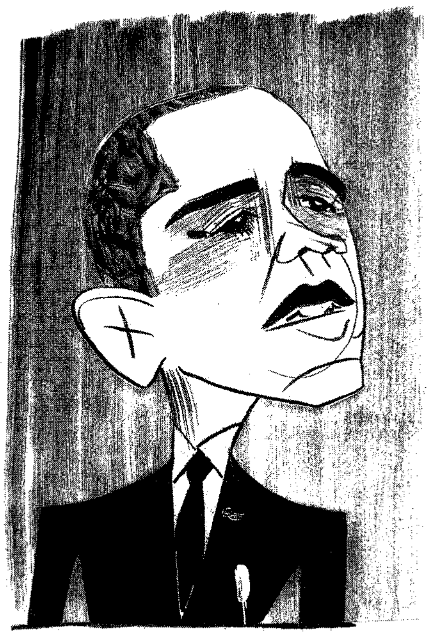
COMMENT
PEACE AND WAR



Thorbjørn Jagland, the chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, in presenting the Peace Prize to Barack Obama last week, quoted the previous African-American recipient, Martin Luther King, Jr., and added, "Mr. President, we are happy to see that through your presence here so much of Dr. King's dream has come true." Obama nodded and pursed his lips in the kind of grimace that passes over his face when he's moved. Perhaps he was thinking of a key passage in the speech that he was about to give—lines that opened up a certain distance from the nonviolent doctrine of King and Mahatma Gandhi. "As a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their examples alone," Obama said, when it was his turn at the lectern. "I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world."

There was no way for the President to avoid mentioning the apparent contradiction between his decision to send thirty thousand more troops to Afghanistan, which he announced two weeks ago at West Point, and his receiving the Peace Prize. But, instead of disposing of it in a perfunctory gesture, he made it the basis of his address, devoting the first half of the speech to what he called the challenge of "reconciling these two seemingly irreconcilable truths—that war is sometimes necessary, and war at some level is an expression of human folly." Working out apparent contradictions, reconciling irreconcilables, finding balances, living with paradox—these are the intellectual bread and butter of Obama's politics. "We can acknowledge that oppression will always be with us, and still strive for justice," Obama concluded. "We can understand that there will be war, and still strive for peace." He is the negative-capability President.

In Oslo in 1964, King used soaring oratory that pitted love and violence as opposites in a cosmic struggle. Forty-five years later, Obama employed the language of a complex and tempered hope. He identified less with the utopianism of King than with the moral realism of John F. Kennedy. He spoke of the "difficult questions about the relationship between war and peace," adding, "I do not bring with me today a definitive solution." After discussing the difficulty of balancing exhortation and diplomacy in the promotion of human rights, he admitted, "There is no simple formula here." But this philosophical modesty isn't only the difference between a politician and a prophet; Obama has been changed by the Presidency. Compare the Nobel speech to the one he gave in Berlin's Tiergarten in July, 2008, in which he envisioned a renewal of the transatlantic partnership, and summoned his two hundred thousand ecstatic listeners to tear down all remaining walls between peoples. Last week, Obama did not tell Europeans what they wanted to hear, and the response of the invited audience at Oslo City Hall, whose décor seemed to have been inspired by that of a progressive pre-school, was distinctly muted.



Between these two speeches, the President spent months deciding whether and why to send young Americans to kill and die in Afghanistan. He seems to have emerged from the intense self-education of this policy review, which included visits to Walter Reed hospital and Arlington National Cemetery, with a new resolve about his power as Commander-in-Chief. In Oslo, Obama was in effect calling the bluff of absolutists on both the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

right and the left. The evangelical idealism and blunt militarism of President George W. Bush did more to taint than to advance the cause of human rights. Both at West Point and in Oslo, Obama's realistic appraisal of a worldwide landscape of bad options served as an implicit rebuke to the simplifications of his predecessor. And yet American weapons and bloodshed, not the dream of world peace, he said, have "helped underwrite global security for more than six decades." There are no good options, but that doesn't relieve Americans of the responsibility to choose, and at times, if necessary, to choose the path of "human folly."

No Obama doctrine yet exists. What the President has is a sophisticated theology, an anti-utopian belief that human imperfection is inevitable but progress is possible if human beings remain self-critical about what they can achieve. This is the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, whom Obama has called "one of my favorite philosophers." One evening in 2007, after leaving the Senate floor, Obama said of Niebuhr, to the *Times'* David Brooks:

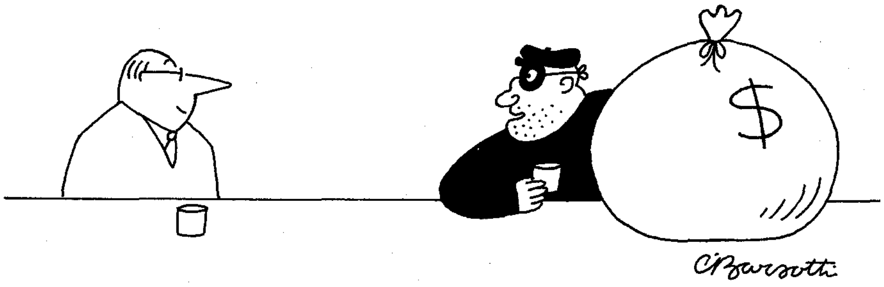
> I take away the compelling idea that there's serious evil in the world, and hardship and pain. And we should be humble and modest in our belief we can eliminate those things. But we shouldn't use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction. I take away the sense we have to make these efforts knowing they are hard, and not swinging from naïve idealism to bitter realism.

The spirit of Niebuhr presided over the Nobel address. Neither idealist nor realist, Obama seemed to be saying that universal values and practical geopolitics exist in the same tension as war and peace. The readiness is all—the ability to discern opportunities and not be hemmed in by rigid abstractions. The President cited Nixon's overture to Mao during the Cultural Revolution as an apparently inexcusable act that over the long run produced real improvements in the lives of the Chinese people. If something similar comes of Obama's outreach to Iran, it, too, could be seen as a historic diplomatic breakthrough. At the moment, however, there's no sign of progress.

In his address, Obama said, "When there is genocide in Darfur, systematic rape in Congo, or repression in Burma, there must be consequences," and he added, "We will bear witness to the quiet dignity of reformers like Aung San Suu Kyi; to the bravery of Zimbabweans who cast their ballots in the face of beatings; to the hundreds of thousands who have marched silently through the streets of Iran." This was the least convincing passage of the speech: so far, there have been no consequences in places like Darfur, and bearing witness—or at least such low-key witness—to Iranian protesters has done nothing to sway the mullahs. The weakness of Obama's strategic flexibility is that it depends so heavily on practical skill, above all in diplomacy, a field in which America has lost its touch over the past two decades. Failure will seem like a failure of vision and principle.

Obama's Peace Prize has been fairly called premature—a criticism that the President himself endorsed, first when the award was announced, in October, and again in Oslo. It was given more for who he is and what he says than for anything that he has done. The speech exemplified a quality of wisdom that could place his legacy among those of previous winners, such as George C. Marshall and Nelson Mandela, against whose achievements he belittled his own. On the other hand, the 2009 Peace Prize could end up like the 1926 version, which went to Aristide Briand, the co-author of a pact outlawing war. The results will tell.

—*George Packer*

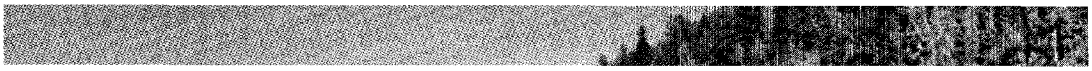


"Invest? No offense, but I've read about you guys."

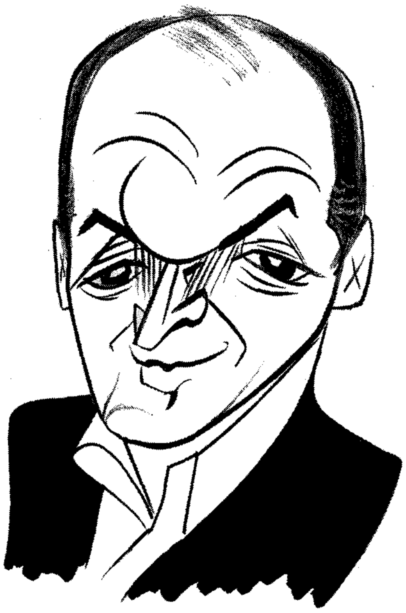
ART'S SAKE PAYOUT

There are a number of phrases that are typically used to identify Victor Pinchuk, who flew into town last week to attend a party at the Gramercy Park Hotel. "The second-richest man in Ukraine" is one of them; "the owner of six television stations and the most popular newspaper in the country" is another, as is "friend of Bill Clinton," "friend of Elton John," and "son-in-law of the former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma." But Pinchuk came to New York in another capacity: that of influential art collector—one of the top two hundred in the world, according to *ARTnews*—and the founder of the Pinchuk Art Centre, his private museum in Kiev. The purpose of his visit was to announce the launch of the Future Generation Art Prize, an award of a hundred thousand dollars, to be given biennially to a young artist. "I arrived this morning, and I am going to fly back tonight, after this," said Pinchuk, who wore an impeccable dark suit and a white shirt open at the collar, and who was looking as fresh after such travels as only a man of his material endowments can. On the way home, he said, he was going to make a stop in Düsseldorf, to drop off Andreas Gursky, the photographer. "Of course, of course—we're all Europeans," he said, with a shrug.

Pinchuk, who is forty-eight, has dark, closely cropped hair, an imposing profile, and a manner of instant intimacy of the sort sometimes adopted by movie stars when thrown into social situations with the less famous: the guiding hand on the elbow; the ironical, twinkling eyes; the murmured, inconsequential confidence. He trained as an engineer in the Soviet era and made his fortune in steel piping in post-Communist Ukraine. He has been collecting contemporary art for only five years, but what he lacks in experience he makes up for in intensity. Among Pinchuk's purchases: Gursky's "99 Cent II Diptychon," for which he reportedly paid $3.3 million in 2007, thereby making it the world's most expensive photograph. (Gursky had flown in the previous day for the party, in spite of other commitments. "It's a really bad time,



right before Christmas," he said, admitting that the ride to Düsseldorf made things easier.) "His collection is tremendously concentrated—he tends to buy in great quantity, and has very high standards," Richard Armstrong, the director of the Guggenheim, who is on the board of the Pinchuk prize, said. (Armstrong visited Kiev last year, where he enjoyed a dinner in a Japanese teahouse on the grounds of Pinchuk's estate.) "He has a great collection of Koonses," Eli Broad, the collector from Los Angeles, who is also on Pinchuk's board, said. (Pinchuk paid a reported twenty-three million dollars for "Hanging Heart," a sculpture by Jeff Koons, in 2007.) "And he did the best show I've ever seen of Damien Hirst," Broad added. (Pinchuk reportedly owns half of Hirst's current show in London, at the Wallace Collection.)



Victor Pinchuk

Hirst couldn't be in New York for the party, but he did send a video message. (On the video, Hirst reminisced about winning the Turner Prize, in 1995: "My mother suddenly understood my work.") Takashi Murakami, who, along with Hirst, Koons, and Gursky, will serve as a "mentor artist" to the prize's recipient, also sent a video message, from his gallery in Tokyo, though Pinchuk seemed more interested in a cartoonish red sculpture that stood off to one side of the frame than in Murakami's respectful greeting. "That's something interesting—I don't know what that is," Pinchuk whispered, but any momentary desire to acquire the piece evaporated when, a little later, he learned from one of Murakami's associates that it was by another artist altogether.

Pinchuk will not have a hand in the selection of the prize-winner, but he has already put a thumb on the scale—the finalists will necessarily include the winner of a prize that he has established for Ukrainian artists. "Let's just say that from the beginning I wanted to give some privilege to Ukraine," he said. Pinchuk is determined to establish Kiev as a "cultural hub." He served two terms in Ukraine's parliament, but says that he is staying out of politics now, or trying to. "It's not easy, when you are the owner of the biggest media group in the country—you can imagine," he said, miming the activity of answering many phones at once.

In any case, he said, it was more important to listen to artists than to politicians. "I think that art is really one of the revolutionary forces in the world, especially in developing countries," he said. "Here in the U.S., you cannot feel the power as strongly as we feel it in our part of the world." Hence the popularity of the Pinchuk Art Centre, which has already drawn nine hundred thousand visitors, most of them between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five. "We always have queues," he said. "There is only one queue in the country, and it is ours. Frankly speaking, during the crisis we had a little bit more queues in Kiev, to the banks—there was panic. But now our gallery has no competition."

—*Rebecca Mead*

DEPT. OF LODGING
PLUMMER'S PAD

For some years in the nineteen-fifties, Christopher Plummer lived in the Algonquin Hotel, on West Forty-fourth Street. One morning last week, a few days before his eightieth birthday, he returned there, from his home, in southwestern Connecticut, and took a round booth at the back of the dining room and recalled his residency. He was wearing a gray tweed jacket over a black sweater, and carried wraparound sunglasses. He seemed happy and fit—punchy—as if he had just won a tennis match against Errol Flynn. He ordered a decaffeinated double espresso, and then asked the waiter, "Do you have biscotti? Things like that?" The waiter replied that there were no biscotti. After the man walked away, Plummer whispered, "You're fired," in feigned affront, and laughed.

He looked around the empty wood-panelled room. A young man who lives in a hotel doesn't "have any responsibility for looking after anything," he said. "You can be free, live out your sexual fantasies." ("I exuded a repellent confidence," Plummer wrote in his autobiography, published last year, referring to his early acting career.) He stayed in the hotel for two years and, later, returned for one more. "It's nice to have the bed done for you," he said. "That signals another day. The horror that happened yesterday is all over and forgotten. Clean sheets. You start life all over again."

Plummer was twenty-five when he first checked in. He was new to New York, and a decade away from starring as Captain von Trapp in "The Sound of Music"—which he refers to as "S. & M."—but he was already making a living, in the theatre and live TV soap operas. "In my teens, I was terribly shy, and people scared me," he said, of his upbringing, in Montreal. His parents had divorced, and, as a boy, he never met his father. "I just always dreamed of going away and staying somewhere transient and being a playboy of every Western—and Eastern—world." And a hotel, "it fits the bill."

Besides, he had no real sense of how to live independently. "I wouldn't have known how to run my life in a flat." (He recalled a designer friend who had an attractive idea for a home where dirty dishes were somehow drawn down a chute and ground to dust.) "And in those days, when drinking was fashionable, it was great fun, this lobby. I'd just roll into bed, drunk, most of the time. What the hell?" He added, "I wasn't the only one. There were lots of other young drunks around, lecherous youngsters, and then the Old Guard: they were two-fisted drinkers, too." He drank, but was never quite lost to drink. "Because I always ate." He compared himself in this regard with Richard Burton and Peter O'Toole, neither of whom ever seemed to pick up a fork. "Don't ask me how he's still alive," he said of O'Toole. "I just have no idea. I love the color green he sports in his face."

By the time Plummer was living in New York, his mother had died, "and there was no real reason to go back to

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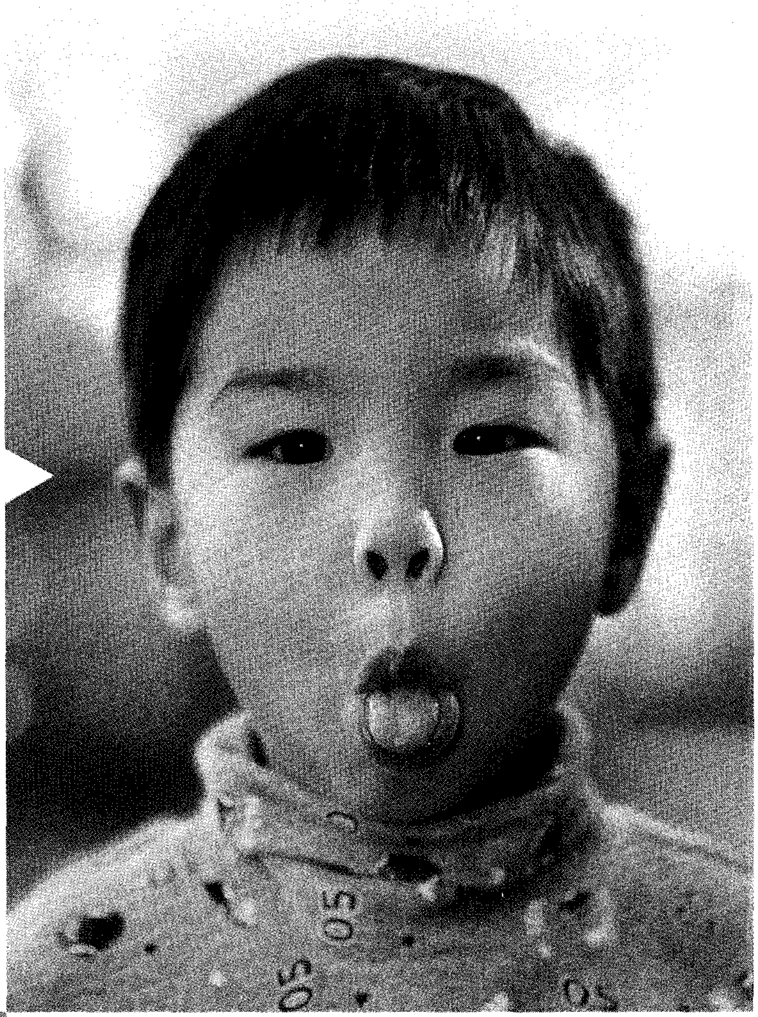

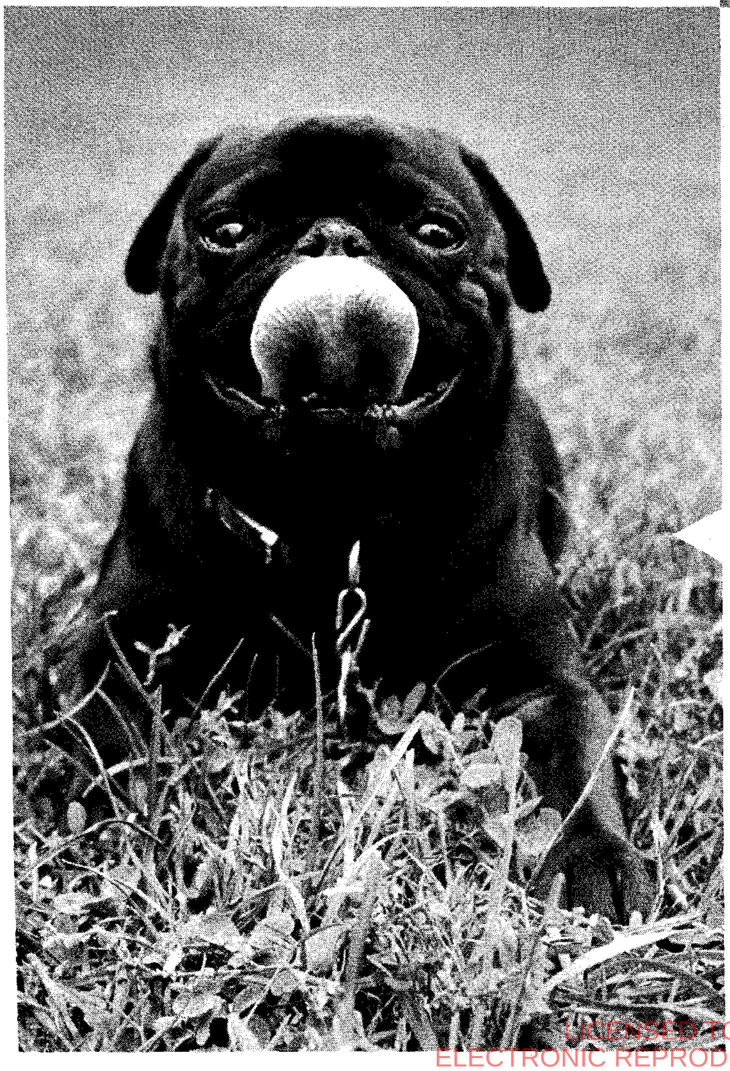

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Montreal at Christmas. I would stay here and hope to God that someone would ask me into their home. And usually I was lucky, but there were moments." Plummer laughed. "God! Jesus! How could anyone as attractive and desirable as myself be ignored at Christmas? I did feel those moments. Which is why I was always in search of a lady."

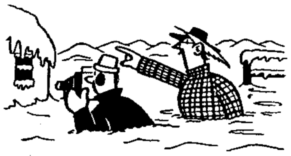
He married for the first time in 1956, but did not commit to the couple's duplex, on Bank Street. "And I didn't exactly commit to the marriage. There was no discipline," he said. "I never really stayed there. I usually ended up here, in an old bed." When his wife wanted to draw his attention to the marriage's end, after a few years, she had all his possessions delivered to a room in the hotel. "When I opened the door, I banged into my entire life, in boxes." He went on, "I realized, pathetically, Thirty years and this is all I've got? A few boxes? This is when I said, I've got to have a house. This is ridiculous."

He married Elaine Taylor, his third wife, in 1970. "I'm just lucky I'm still married," Plummer said, laughing. If not, he'd be "a bitter old actor, alone in a hotel." Instead, he is taking strolls across his Connecticut acres, and wearing a beard in "The Last Station" (he plays Tolstoy) and in Terry Gilliam's "The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus." "Two different long beards—it's the year of the beard," he said, putting his hand to a smooth chin. Next summer, he will play Prospero onstage, with some anxiety. "Prospero sounds like 'Oh, he's getting on now. I guess this must be his last role.' Then I'll do something very quickly afterward, so I don't die."

Plummer ordered a blueberry dessert, and the room began to fill with lunch guests.

—*Ian Parker*

DEPT. OF ORIENTATION
EL SUPER



Sometimes in New York you see a whole lot of people gathering in a state of high excitement and you have no idea what's going on. That happened on a recent Friday at the Bronx Museum, 165th Street and the Grand Concourse, at about five-forty-five in the evening. Crowds started to show up and converse animatedly in Spanish and English—hugs, laughter, elders exclaiming over beautiful grownup women who had been girls in grade school the last time the elders saw them, etc. Turned out that everybody was there for a screening of the beloved Cuban-American movie "El Super." Generations of Spanish-speaking immigrants have watched and rewatched this movie since it came out, in 1979. The screening, part of the Bronx Museum's "First Fridays!" program of evening events open to the public, was to celebrate the movie's thirtieth anniversary. Free admission, free empanadas (soy meat, or ricotta with spinach), soft drinks for two dollars and beer or wine for three—why not?

Every exhibit in the Bronx Museum has to do with the Bronx. One room is devoted to the ideas of artists and city planners for redesigning the Grand Concourse, the Bronx's main street. Another has works by artists who live in the Bronx or are otherwise connected to it: graffiti paintings, Willie Cole's famous "America" blackboard, relics found by Lisa Kahane (a bus driver's coin dispenser, made vestigial by rust), photographs of salsa stars, a video in which Balozi Dola, the Tanzanian rapper, walks into a Bronx barbershop and dazzles some old hip-hop pros with high-speed raps in Swahili; images of the D train, big splashes of color, photos of flames, a display of spray-paint cans . . .

"El Super" was shown in an upstairs gallery that seated about a hundred and fifty and stood thirty or so more along the walls. Faces turned upward to the screen with the expectant, half-smiling expressions of those waiting to be shown a favorite magic trick. English subtitles helped the few who needed them. Sometimes the crowd laughed at lines the subtitles didn't provide. "El Super" 's story is about a Cuban exile named Roberto, who has taken the job of super in a Washington Heights apartment building, where he lives in the basement with his wife and teen-age daughter. The movie's first line, shouted from upstairs, is "Super, turn on the boiler!" The time is winter, late nineteen-seventies. Every time the family closes the apartment door, they rearrange a strip of carpet put there to block the drafts. A great feature of the movie is that it records, by meteorological happenstance, the huge New York City snowfalls of the winter of 1978-79. The camera carefully follows the super on his errands, in his incompletely zipped-up coat and earflap hat, as he negotiates the immense and real heaps of plowed snow at every intersection. The shivery authenticity is far beyond anything special effects could do.

The super gets more and more fed up. He has to listen to the anti-Communist tirades, accompanied by big gestures with a cigar, of his vehement friend Pancho, a Bay of Pigs veteran. His daughter is possibly pregnant, possibly by a local gym teacher whom his wife refers to as "Kinny or Kenny." A New York City building inspector shows up, and Roberto's friend Cuco is called upon to translate, sort of. Soon after, in near-total exasperation and surrender, Roberto describes for another friend how he has just discovered the body of a frozen thief stuck in the window grate of an unoccupied apartment. Raymundo Hidalgo-Gato, the actor who plays Roberto, somehow can make even dismal situations funny. The loud, fall-off-your-chair laughter many of his remarks produced seemed an unusual sound for an art museum. The movie has sad parts, too, and lifelike scenes where the super just sits and watches television. The ending revolves around a question about whether or not to move to Miami.

Afterward, there were speeches and commentary. Iván Acosta, who wrote and directed the play on which the movie is based, noted that he had arrived in America from Cuba forty-eight years ago on this very day. He spoke affectionately about Raymundo Hidalgo-Gato, who died nine years ago. Leon Ichaso, one of the movie's directors, described how he had been making TV commercials for Goya Foods back in '78 and had used some money from that to help produce the movie. People talked about how the movie had helped them understand their lives. A young man said that he had seen "El Super" for the first time after immigrating from Cuba, five years ago, and he now believed that a DVD of this movie should be given to every immigrant on arrival. Someone asked Leon Ichaso if the play had as much snow in it as the movie does. "The play has less snow," he said. "I wanted the movie to be not so much about politics and more about the weather. When we filmed the movie, it was just luck that we had so much snow."

—*Ian Frazier*

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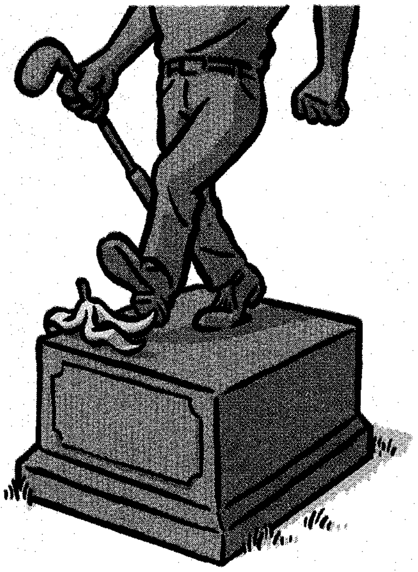
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
BRANDED A CHEAT

A recent issue of *Forbes* features a full-page ad for the consulting firm Accenture with Tiger Woods striding through tall grass. The tagline reads, "The road to high performance isn't always paved." To which the obvious rejoinder these days is "Sometimes it runs straight into a fire hydrant." Jokes about Woods's current woes come easy, but the story is not trivial—at least, not in terms of money. Woods has been the best-paid athlete in the world for almost a decade, and much of that income is from endorsements; *ESPN* once estimated that his lifetime earnings could total as much as six billion dollars. When the scandal erupted, journalists and brand-marketing experts alike insisted that it would have little impact on Woods's advertising appeal, and his sponsors—including Nike, Gillette, and Gatorade—quickly affirmed their support for him. But, from the start, this attitude seemed like wishful thinking. The problem isn't a question of morals, exactly; it's that a huge gap has opened up between Woods's advertising persona and his public image. With every new revelation, it seems that the biggest career in sports is being reshaped before our eyes.

The fact that a golfer's marital troubles might affect the bottom line of a multinational is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although athletes have been endorsing products for more than a century—beginning, by most accounts, in 1905, when Honus Wagner put his name on Louisville Slugger bats—the importance of endorsements to the sports economy really dates back to the sixties, when Arnold Palmer and his agent, Mark McCormack, effectively invented the athlete as brand, with Palmer the quintessential Everyman fronting for companies like Pennzoil, Hertz, and Sears. In the eighties, Michael Jordan took the endorsement game to a new level, perfecting the iconic association of athlete and individual product with the Air Jordan line, while his off-the-court bonhomie made him an ideal spokesman for brands like Coca-Cola, McDonald's, and Hanes. Woods, in turn, has broken new ground by becoming the face of Accenture, a company whose customers are corporations rather than ordinary consumers. Like his predecessors, he has endorsed sports products and consumer goods. But he has also become a kind of ubiquitous symbol of the business world.

There is a logic to this. Unlike Palmer or Jordan, Woods never seemed warm or even especially personable. Instead, he seemed resolutely businesslike. Woods's appeal was based, ultimately, not on his physical abilities but on his mental toughness, his extraordinary capacity for focus and discipline. He was the man who always made the key putt, who never cracked under pressure. That's why Gatorade, introducing a new drink with his face on the label, called the drink Tiger Focus. And it's why the most powerful Nike ad about him is the one in which his father, in a voice-over, says, "I'd say, 'Tiger, I promise you that you'll never meet another person as mentally tough as you in your entire life. And he hasn't . . . and he never will.' "



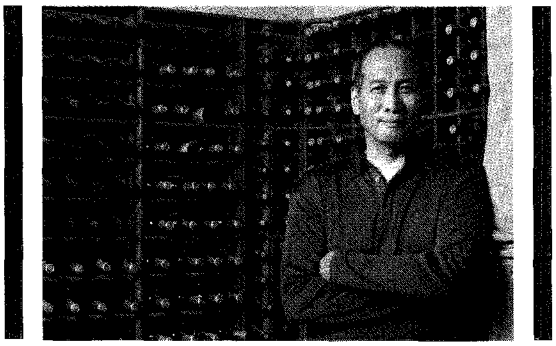
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

In other words, Woods has been presented as the embodiment of bourgeois virtues: dedication, hard work, single-mindedness. Indeed, when, in 2008, Woods won the U.S. Open while essentially playing on one leg, the *Times*' David Brooks devoted a column to his extraordinary ability to block out distraction and focus on the matter at hand, dubbing him "the exemplar of mental discipline" for our time. For millions of people—many of them, to be sure, affluent middle-aged white guys—Woods embodied an approach not just to golf but to life. Myriad studies show that celebrity endorsements are most successful when there is a tight fit between the pitchman's identity and the product he's pitching. Woods was the rare athlete whose identity seemed to fit not just with golf clubs or sports drinks but with consulting firms.

The current scandal has disrupted, if not shattered, this image of perfect control. Scandals that aren't out of tune with a celebrity's image are often surprisingly easy to bounce back from: after images of Kate Moss snorting coke surfaced, her bookings fell, but, over time, they went up. Revelations that Michael Jordan had lost hundreds of thousands of dollars gambling barely dented his appeal, since the story reinforced the image of him as a fierce competitor. But scandals that conflict with a person's public image can wreak havoc. And it's hard to think of a scandal that's more discordant with an image of focus and discipline than this one. Woods's alleged cavorting with Vegas waitresses and celebrity groupies, his woeful "sexts" and voice mails, his driving his S.U.V. into a tree: all these things make him look weak and discombobulated. Some have speculated, optimistically, that this may humanize the Tiger. But that's exactly the problem: what was so amazing about Woods was precisely that he wasn't like the rest of us—that he wasn't weak or distracted.

Woods is too big a name for his sponsors to simply abandon him, even though Gatorade has discontinued its Tiger line (for other reasons, it says). But the scandal may well narrow his appeal, turning him from someone whose virtues seemed relevant to many fields of work into someone whose virtues apply mainly to golf. And while comebacks may be an American tradition, it's not clear that you can ever get all the way back: for instance, Kobe Bryant's endorsement income today is much smaller than his on-court performance would lead you to expect. If Woods returns in April and wins the Masters, it will make for an extraordinary story. Still, it seems unlikely that any company will be advising us to "Be a Tiger" anytime soon.

—*James Surowiecki*



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LETTER FROM CHINA

GREEN GIANT

Beijing's crash program for clean energy.

BY EVAN OSNOS

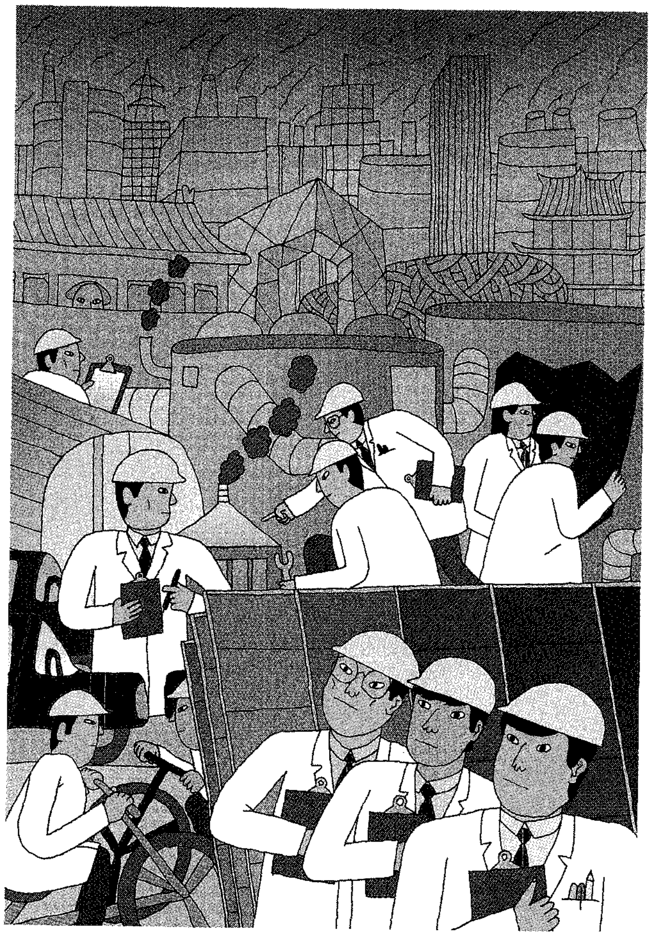
On March 3, 1986, four of China's top weapons scientists—each a veteran of the missile and space programs—sent a private letter to Deng Xiaoping, the leader of the country. Their letter was a warning: Decades of relentless focus on militarization had crippled the country's civilian scientific establishment; China must join the world's *xin jishu geming*, the "new technological revolution," they said, or it would be left behind. They called for an élite project devoted to technology ranging from biotech to space research. Deng agreed, and scribbled on the letter, "Action must be taken on this now." This was China's "Sputnik moment," and the project was code-named the 863 Program, for the year and month of its birth.

In the years that followed, the government pumped billions of dollars into labs and universities and enterprises, on projects ranging from cloning to underwater robots. Then, in 2001, Chinese officials abruptly expanded one program in particular: energy technology. The reasons were clear. Once the largest oil exporter in East Asia, China was now adding more than two thousand cars a day and importing millions of barrels; its energy security hinged on a flotilla of tankers stretched across distant seas. Meanwhile, China was getting nearly eighty per cent of its electricity from coal, which was rendering the air in much of the country unbreathable and hastening climate changes that could undermine China's future stability. Rising sea levels were on pace to create more refugees in China than in any other country, even Bangladesh.

In 2006, Chinese leaders redoubled their commitment to new energy technology; they boosted funding for research and set targets for installing wind turbines, solar panels, hydroelectric dams, and other renewable sources of energy that were higher than goals in the United States. China doubled its wind-power capacity that year, then doubled it again the next year, and the year after. The country had virtually no solar industry in 2003; five years later, it was manufacturing more solar cells than any other country, winning customers from foreign companies that had invented the technology in the first place. As President Hu Jintao, a political heir of Deng Xiaoping, put it in October of this year, China must "seize preëmptive opportunities in the new round of the global energy revolution."

A China born again green can be hard to imagine, especially for people who live here. After four years in Beijing, I've learned how to gauge the pollution before I open the curtains; by dawn on the smoggiest days, the lungs ache. The city government does not dwell on the details; its daily air-quality measurement does not even tally the tiniest particles of pollution, which are the most damaging to the respiratory system. Last year, the U.S. Embassy installed an air monitor on the roof of one of its buildings, and every hour it posts the results to a Twitter feed, with a score ranging from 1, which is the cleanest air, to 500, the dirtiest. American cities consider anything above 100 to be unhealthy. The rare times in which an American city has scored above 300 have been in the midst of forest fires. In these cases, the government puts out public-health notices warning that the air is "hazardous" and that "everyone should avoid all physical activity outdoors." As I type this in Beijing, the Embassy's air monitor says that today's score is 500.

China is so big—and is growing so fast—that in 2006 it passed the United States to become the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases. If China's emissions keep climbing as they have for the past thirty years, the country will emit more of those gases in the next thirty years than the United States has in its entire history. So the question is no longer whether China is equipped to play a role in combatting climate change but how that role will affect other countries. David Sandalow, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Energy for Policy and International Affairs, has been to China five times in five months. He told me, "China's investment in clean energy is extraordinary." For America, he added, the implication is clear: "Unless the U.S. makes



China's clean-tech advances should be a warning to the U.S.

JORDAN AWAN

investments, we are not competitive in the clean-tech sector in the years and decades to come."

One of the firms that are part of the 863 Program is Goldwind Science and Technology Company. It operates a plant and a laboratory in a cluster of high-tech companies in an outlying district of Beijing called Yizhuang, which has been trying to rebrand itself with the name E-Town. (China has been establishing high-tech clusters since the late nineteen-eighties, after scientists returned from abroad with news of Silicon Valley and Route 128.) Yizhuang was a royal hunting ground under the last emperor, but, as E-Town, it has the sweeping asphalt vistas of a suburban office park, around blocks of reflective-glass buildings, occupied by Nokia, Bosch, and other corporations. Local planning officials have embraced the vocabulary of a new era; E-Town, they say, will be a model not only of e-business but also of e-government, e-community, e-knowledge, and e-parks.

When I reached Goldwind, the first thing I saw was a spirited soccer game under way on a field in the center of the campus. An artificial rock-climbing wall covered one side of the glass-and-steel research center. I met the chairman, Wu Gang, in his office on the third floor, and I asked about the sports. "We employ several coaches and music teachers," he said. "They do training for our staff." A pair of pushup bars rested on the carpet beside his desk. At fifty-one years old, Wu is tall, with wire-rim glasses, rumpled black hair, and the broad shoulders of a swimmer. ("I can do the butterfly," he said.) For fun, he sings Peking opera. Wu said that he had not been a robust child: "My education was very serious. Just learning, learning, learning. I wanted to jump out of that!"

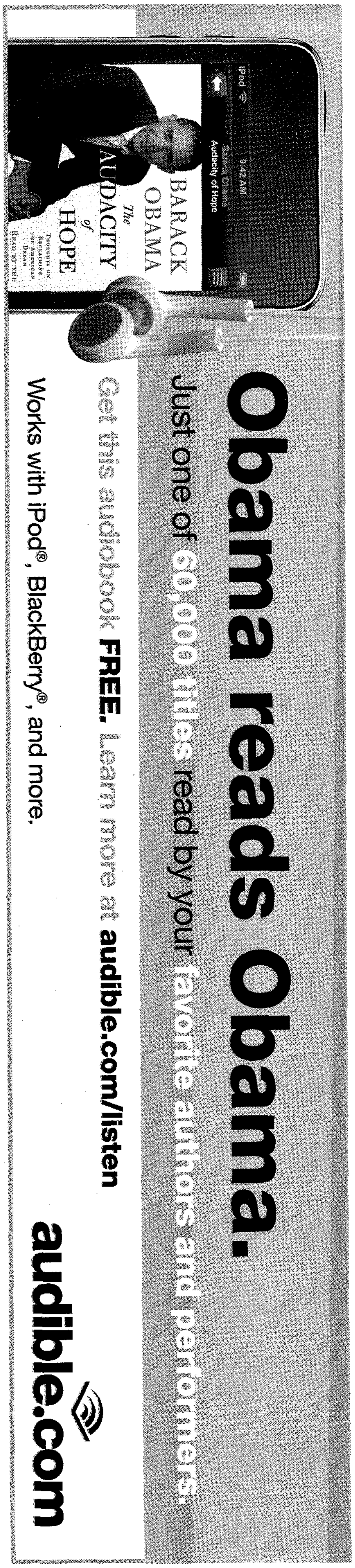
Wu integrates his hobbies into his work life in the manner of a California entrepreneur. He once led seventeen people, including seven Goldwind employees, on a mountaineering expedition across Mt. Bogda, in the Tian Shan range, in western China. "We Chinese are very weak in this field—teamwork," Wu said. He recently put his workers on a five-year self-improvement regimen; among the corporate announcements on Goldwind's Web site, the company now posts its in-house sports reports. ("All the vigorous and valiant players shot and dunked frequently," according to a recent basketball report on a game between factory workers.)

Wu was born and raised in the far-western region of Xinjiang, home to vast plains and peaks that create natural wind tunnels, with gusts so ferocious that they can sweep trains from their tracks. In the nineteen-eighties, engineers from Europe began arriving in Xinjiang, in order to test their wind turbines, and in 1987 Wu, then a young engineer in charge of an early Chinese wind farm, worked alongside engineers from Denmark, a center of wind-power research. He immersed himself in the mechanics of turbines—"Where are their stomachs, and where are their hearts?" he said. In 1997, state science officials offered him the project of building a six-hundred-kilowatt turbine, small by international standards but still unknown territory in China. Many recipients of government research funding simply used the money to conduct their experiments and move on, but some, like Wu, saw the cash as the kernel of a business. He figured that every dollar from the government could attract more than ten dollars in bank loans: "We can show them, 'This is money we got from the science ministry.' "

Wu saw little reason to start from zero: Goldwind licensed a design from Jacobs Energie, a German company. Manufacturing was not as simple. Early attempts were a "terrible failure," Wu said. "Whole blades dropped off." He shook his head. "The main shafts broke. It was really very dangerous."

Goldwind shut down for three months. The company eventually solved the problems, and, with the help of 863 and other government funding, it expanded into a full range of large and sophisticated turbines. Many of them were licensed from abroad, but, as they were built in China, they sold for a third less than European and American rivals. Goldwind's sales doubled every year from 2000 to 2008. In 2007, Wu took the company public, and garnered nearly two hundred million dollars.

China has made up so much ground on clean tech in part through protectionism—until recently, wind farms were required to use turbines with locally manufactured parts. The requirement went into effect in 2003; by the time it was



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lifted, six years later, Chinese turbines dominated the local market. In fact, the policy worked too well: China's wind farms have grown so fast that, according to estimates, between twenty and thirty per cent aren't actually generating electricity. A surplus of factories was only part of the problem: local bureaucrats, it turned out, were being rewarded not for how much electricity they generated but for how much equipment they installed—a blunder that is often cited by skeptics of China's efforts.

They have a point; many factories are churning out cheap, unreliable turbines, because the government lacks sufficient technical standards. But the grid problem is probably temporary. China is already buying and installing the world's most efficient transmission lines—"an area where China has actually moved ahead of the U.S.," according to Deborah Seligsohn, a senior fellow at the World Resources Institute. In the next decade, China plans to install wind-power equipment capable of generating nearly five times the power of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest producer.

After I met with Wu Gang, the company's director of strategy and global development, Zhou Tong, an elegant woman in her thirties, handed me a hard hat and walked me next door to the turbine-assembly plant, an immaculate four-story hangar filled with workers in orange jumpsuits piecing together turbine parts that were as big and spacey-looking as Airstream trailers. The turbines were astonishing pieces of equipment—large enough so that some manufacturers put helicopter pads on top—and the technical complexity dispelled any lingering image I had of Chinese factories as rows of unskilled workers stooped over cheap electronics. Wandering among the turbines, we passed some Ping-Pong tables, where a competition was under way, and stopped in front of a shiny white dome that looked like the nose of a passenger jet. It was a rotor hub—the point where blades intersect—and it was part of Goldwind's newest treasure, a turbine large enough to generate 2.5 megawatts of electricity, its largest yet. "Wow, this is a 2.5!" Zhou exclaimed. "I saw the first one in Germany. This is the first one I've seen here." Wu was set to unveil the new turbine at a press conference the next day. A flatbed truck, loaded with turbine parts and idling in the doorway, was bound for wind farms throughout Manchuria.

The prospect of a future powered by the sun and the wind is so appealing that it obscures a less charming fact: coal is going nowhere soon. Even the most optimistic forecasts agree that China and the United States, for the foreseeable future, will remain ravenous consumers. (China burns more coal than America, Europe, and Japan combined.) As Julio Friedmann, an energy expert at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, near San Francisco, told me, "The decisions that China and the U.S. make in the next five years in the coal sector will determine the future of this century."

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FARLEY KATZ

"Yes, you're a bad boy. Be that bad criminal, man—own it!"

In 2001, the 863 Program launched a "clean coal" project, and Yao Qiang, a professor of thermal engineering at Beijing's Tsinghua University, was appointed to the committee in charge. He said that its purpose is simple: to spur innovation of ideas so risky and expensive that no private company will attempt them alone. The government is not trying to ordain which technologies will prevail; the notion of attempting to pick "winners and losers" is as unpopular among Chinese technologists as it is in Silicon Valley. Rather, Yao sees his role as trying to insure that promising ideas have a chance to contend at all. "If the government does nothing, the technology is doomed to fail," he said.

Grants from the 863 Program flowed to places like the Thermal Power Research Institute, based in the ancient city of Xi'an, in the center of China's coal country. "The impact was huge," Xu Shisen, the chief engineer at the institute, told me over lunch recently. "Take our project, for example," he said, referring to an experimental power plant that, if successful, will produce very low emissions. "Without 863, the technology would have been delayed for years."

After lunch, a pair of engineers took me to see their laboratory: a drab eight-story concrete building, crammed with so many pipes and ducts that it felt like the engine room of a ship. We climbed the stairs to the fourth floor and stepped into a room with sacks of coal samples lining the walls like sandbags. In the center of the room was a device that looked like a household boiler, although it was three times the usual size, and pipes and wires bristled from the top and the sides. It was an experimental coal "gasifier," which uses intense pressure and heat to turn coal dust into a gas that can be burned with less waste, rather than burning coal the old-fashioned way. With a coal gasifier, it is far easier to extract greenhouse emissions, so that they can be stored or reused, instead of floating into the atmosphere. Gasifiers have been around for decades, but they are expensive—from five hundred million to more than two billion dollars for the power-plant size—so hardly any American utilities use them. The researchers in Xi'an,

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however, set out to make one better and cheaper.

One of the engineers, Xu Yue, joined the gasifier project in 1997. A team of ten worked in twelve-hour shifts, conducting their experiments around the clock. "There was a bed there," he said, pointing to the corner of a soot-stained control room. (The image of China as a nation of engineers toiling for pennies is overstated; Xu Yue works hard, but he earns around a hundred thousand dollars a year.) Beyond salaries, everything about the lab was cheaper than it would have been in the U.S., from the land on which it was built to the cost of heating the building, and when the gasifier was finished it had a price tag one-third to one-half that of the equivalent in the West.

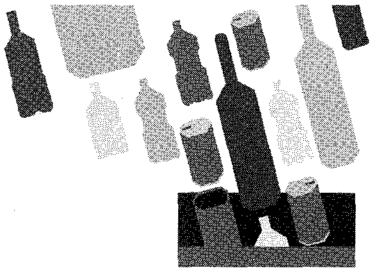
When Albert Lin, an American energy entrepreneur on the board of Future Fuels, a Texas-based power-plant developer, set out to find a gasifier for a pioneering new plant that is designed to spew less greenhouse gas, he figured that he would buy one from G.E. or Shell. Then his engineers tested the Xi'an version. It was "the absolute best we've seen," Lin told me. (Lin said that the "secret sauce" in the Chinese design is a clever bit of engineering that recycles the heat created by the gasifier to convert yet more coal into gas.) His company licensed the Chinese design, marking one of the first instances of Chinese coal technology's coming to America. "Fifteen or twenty years ago, anyone you asked would have said that Western technologies in coal gasification were superior to anything in China," Lin said. "Now, I think, that claim is not true."

The 863 Program took much of its shape from the American research system used by the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense: the government appointed panels of experts, who drew up research priorities, called for bids, and awarded contracts. In 1987, the government gave it an initial budget of around two hundred million dollars a year. That figure was small by Western standards, but the sum went far in China, according to Evan Feigenbaum, an Asia specialist at the Council on Foreign Relations, who studied the program. When I mentioned to Xu Shisen, the coal engineer in Xi'an, that American scientists are dubious of top-down efforts to drive innovation, he suggested that the system is more competitive than outsiders imagine. "It is very intense—like a Presidential election," he joked, and he sketched out the system: "Normally, each project will have five to eight contenders—some less, some more—but there is a broad field of innovators. A lot of companies are doing the same thing, so everyone wants to have a breakthrough." He went on, "It's not possible to have a flawless system, but it makes relatively few mistakes. It combines the will of the state with mass innovation."

R. & D. expenditures have grown faster in China than in any other big country—climbing about twenty per cent each year for two decades, to seventy billion dollars last year. Investment in energy research under the 863 Program has grown far faster: between 1991 and 2005, the most recent year on record, the amount increased nearly fifty-fold.

In America, things have gone differently. In April of 1977, President Jimmy Carter warned that the hunt for new energy sources, triggered by the second Arab oil embargo, would be the "moral equivalent of war." He nearly quadrupled public investment in energy research, and by the mid-nineteen-eighties the U.S. was the unchallenged leader in clean technology, manufacturing more than fifty per cent of the world's solar cells and installing ninety per cent of the wind power.

Ronald Reagan, however, campaigned on a pledge to abolish the Department of Energy, and, once in office, he reduced investment in research, beginning a slide that would continue for a quarter century. "We were working on a whole slate of very innovative and interesting technologies," Friedmann, of the Lawrence Livermore lab, said. "And, basically, when the price of oil dropped in 1986, we rolled up the carpet and said, 'This isn't interesting anymore.' " By 2006, according to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the U.S. government was investing $1.4 billion a year—less than one-sixth the level at its peak, in 1979, with adjustments for inflation. (Federal spending on medical research, by contrast, nearly quadrupled during that time, to more than twenty-nine billion dollars.)



Scientists were alarmed. The starkest warning came in 2005, from the National Academies, the country's top science advisory body, which released "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," a landmark report on U.S. competitiveness. It urged the government to boost investment in research, especially in energy. The authors—among them Steven Chu, then the director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and now the Secretary of Energy, and Robert Gates, the former C.I.A. director and now the Secretary of Defense—wrote, "We fear the abruptness with which a lead in science and technology can be lost—and the difficulty of recovering a lead once lost, if indeed it can be regained at all."

They called for a new energy agency that could spur the hunt for "transformative" technologies. It would inject money into universities and companies and would be called the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, or ARPA-E, modelled on DARPA, the Defense Department unit that President Eisenhower founded in response to Sputnik. (DARPA went on to play a significant role in the invention of the Internet, stealth technology, and the computer mouse, among other things.) ARPA-E, they hoped, would shepherd new energy inventions from the lab to the market, bridging the funding gap that is referred to in engineering circles as the "valley of death." Congress approved the idea in 2007, but President George W. Bush criticized it as an "expansion of government" into a role that is "more appropriately left to the private sector." He never requested funding, and the idea fizzled.

Other plans withered as well. In January, 2008, the Bush Administration withdrew support for FutureGen, a proposed project in Illinois that would have been the world's first coal-fired, near-zero-emissions power plant. The Administration cited cost overruns, saying the price had climbed to $1.8 billion, but an audit by the Government Accountability Office later discovered that Bush appointees had overstated the costs by five hundred million dollars. House Democrats launched an investigation, which concluded, "FutureGen appears to have been nothing more than a public-relations ploy for Bush Administration officials to make it appear to the public and the world that the United States was doing something to address global warming." An internal Energy Department report had warned that cancelling the project would set back the advance of carbon-storage technology by "at least 10 years." An e-mail between officials emphasized that Bush's Secretary of Energy, Samuel Bodman, "wants to kill" FutureGen "with or without a Plan B." (Bodman denies that costs were overstated.)

After FutureGen foundered, China broke ground on its own version: GreenGen. If it opens as planned, in 2011, China will have the most high-tech low-emissions coal-fired plant in the world.

Two summers ago, a truckload of Beijing municipal workers turned up in my neighborhood and began unspooling heavy-duty black power lines, which they attached to our houses, in preparation for a campaign to replace coal-burning furnaces with electric radiators. Soon, the Coal-to-Electricity Project, as it was called, opened a small radiator showroom in a storefront around the corner, on a block shared by a sex shop and a vender of funeral shrouds. My neighbors and I wandered over to choose from among the radiator options.

Two-thirds of the price was subsidized by the city, which estimates that it has replaced almost a hundred thousand coal stoves since the project began, five years ago, cutting down on sulfur and dust emissions. I settled on a Marley CNLS340, a heater about the size of a large suitcase, manufactured in Shanghai. It had a built-in thermostat preprogrammed to use less electricity during peak day hours and then store it up at night, when demand was lower—a principle similar to the "smart meters" that American utilities plan to install in the next decade.

Neighbors began cutting their electricity bills by climbing up to their rooftops and installing solar water heaters—simple pieces of equipment with a water tank and a stretch of glass tubing to be heated by the sun. (China, which produces fifty per cent of the world's solar heaters, now uses more of them than any other country.) And in the hardware stalls of the raucous covered market nearby, where the inventory ranges from live eels to doorbells, coiled high-efficiency light bulbs began crowding out traditional bulbs for sale. The government, it turned out, had instituted a thirty-per-cent wholesale subsidy on efficient bulbs. Without anybody really noticing, China sold sixty-two million subsidized bulbs in ten months.

When Hu Jintao called on China to adopt a "scientific concept of development," in 2003, he was making a point: China's history of development at all costs had run its course. And, in ways that were easy to overlook, China had embarked on deep changes.

In the summer of 2005, Edward Cunningham, a Ph.D. student researching energy policy at M.I.T., was travelling in the Chinese countryside when he noticed something peculiar: the government was allowing the price of coal to rise sharply, after decades of controls. "I said, 'How the hell?' " he recalled. " 'That can't be right. Maybe this is just some freak anecdotal evidence.' " It was in fact a pivotal change: Manipulating the price of coal had always insured that Chinese utilities would produce ever more electricity, but the unhappy side effect was that utilities needed to build nothing more efficient than the cheapest, dirtiest plants. Coal prices had begun to rise, however, and that would leave power plants no choice but to install cleaner, more efficient equipment. Cunningham, now a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard, said that the effect had broad consequences. "We are going to see a huge amount of learning that we have not seen in the U.S."

Learning, in technology terms, is another way of saying "reducing cost." The more a technology is produced, the cheaper it becomes, and that can lead to change as revolutionary as dreaming up an invention in the first place: Henry Ford invented neither the automobile nor the assembly line. He simply perfected their combination to yield the world's first affordable cars.

In the same way, technology that is too expensive to be profitable in the West can become economical once China is involved; DVD players and flat-screen televisions were luxury goods until Chinese low-cost production made them ubiquitous. So far, many of the most promising energy technologies—from

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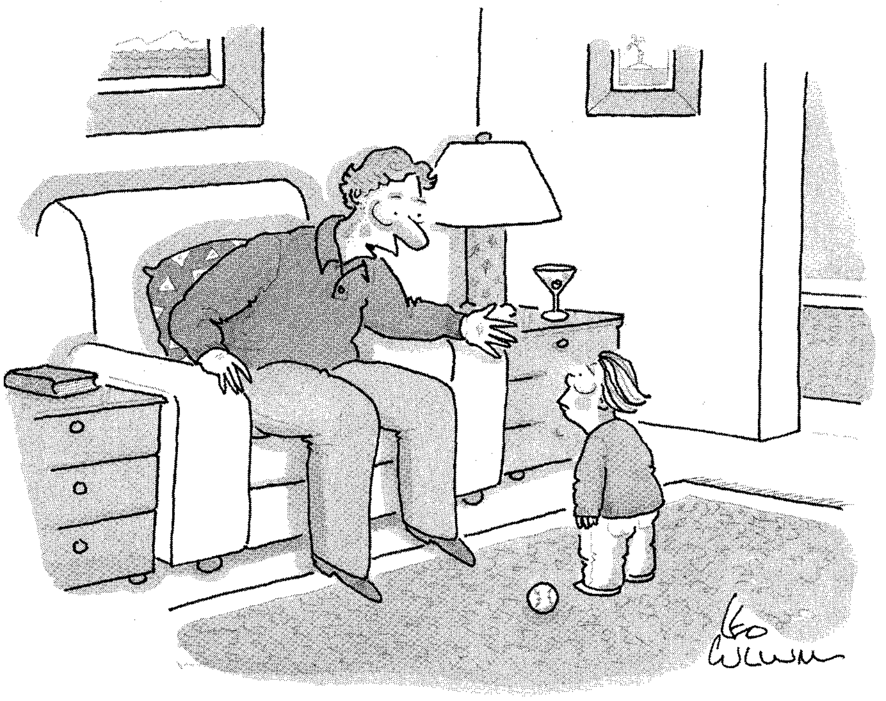


"We love Santa, but Santa didn't know as much about investing as he thought he did."

• •

thin-film solar cells to complex systems that store carbon in depleted oil wells—are luxury goods, but the combination of Chinese manufacturing and American innovation is powerful; Kevin Czinger, a former Goldman Sachs executive, called it "the Apple model." "Own the brand, the design, and the intellectual property," he said, and then go to whoever can manufacture the technology reliably and cheaply. A few years ago, Czinger began looking at the business of electric cars. Detroit was going to move slowly, he figured, to avoid undermining its main business, and U.S. startups, including Tesla and Fisker, were planning to sell luxury electric cars for more than eighty thousand dollars each. Czinger had something else in mind.

"These cars should be far simpler and far cheaper than anything that's manufactured today," he told me when we met last spring in Beijing. At fifty, Czinger has brown hair swept back, sharp cheekbones, and an intensity that borders on the unnerving. ("Kevin Czinger was the toughest kid to play football at Yale in my thirty-two years as head coach," Carm Cozza, the former Yale coach, wrote in a memoir. "He was also the most unusual personality, probably the outstanding overachiever, maybe the brightest student, and definitely the scariest individual.")

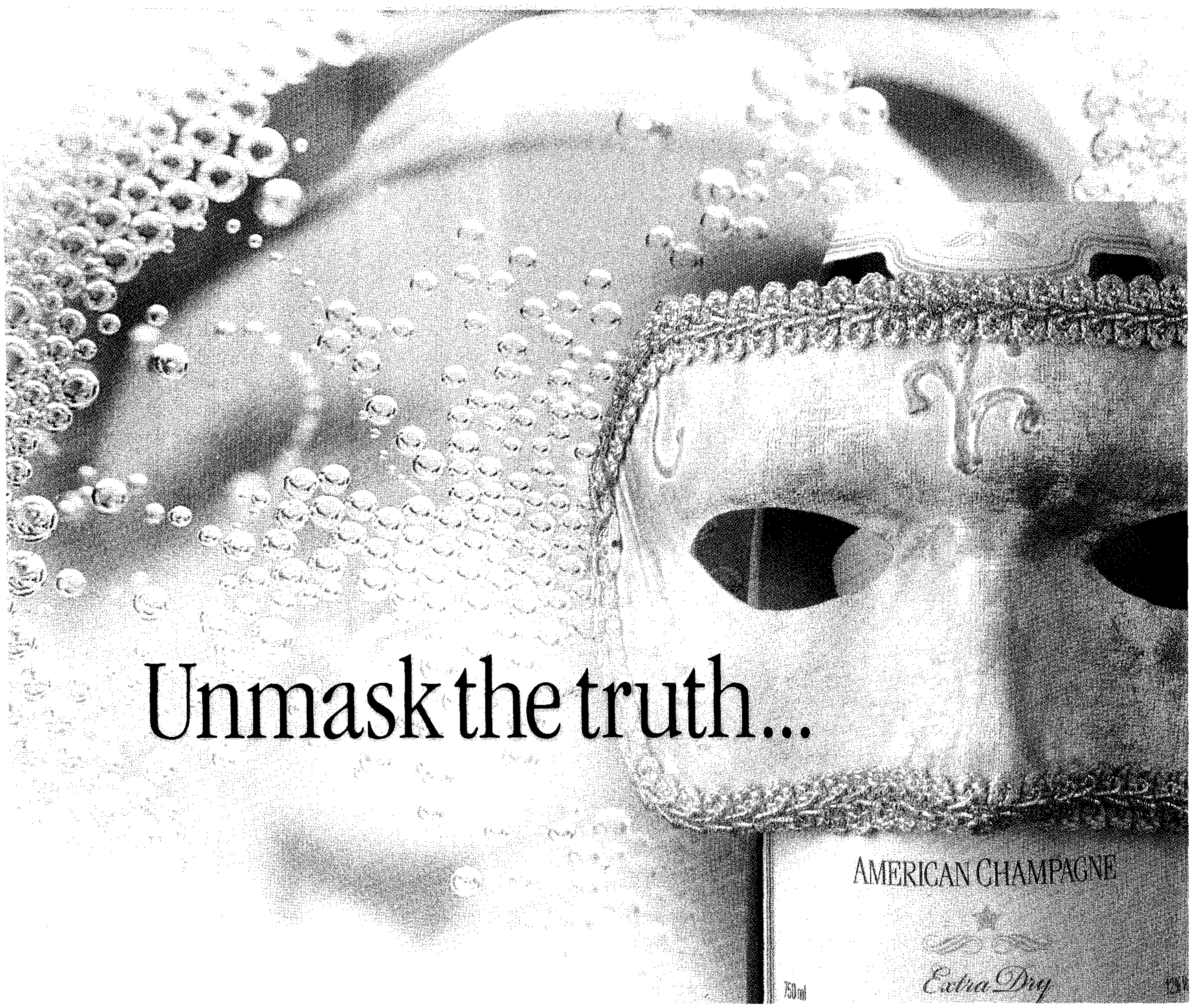
In the spring of 2008, Czinger signed on as the C.E.O. of Miles Electric Vehicles, a small electric-car company in Santa Monica that was looking to expand, and he went searching for a Chinese partner. He ended up at Tianjin Lishen Battery Joint-Stock Company. A decade ago, Japan dominated the world of lithium-ion batteries—the powerful, lightweight cells that hold promise for an electric-car future—but in 1998 the Chinese government launched a push to catch up. Lishen received millions in subsidies and hundreds of acres of low-cost land to build a factory. The company grew to two hundred and fifty million dollars in annual sales, with customers including Apple, Samsung, and Motorola. Last year, the 863 Program gave Lishen a $2.6-million grant to get into the electric-car business. That is when Czinger showed up. "We hit it off immediately," Qin Xingcai, the general manager of Lishen, said.

Czinger, who by now was heading up a sister company called Coda Automotive, added components from America and Germany and a chassis licensed from Japan. If all goes as planned, the Coda will become the first mass-produced all-electric sedan for sale in the United States next fall, with a price tag, after government rebates, of about thirty-two thousand dollars. The Coda looks normal to the point of banal, a Toyota-ish family car indistinguishable from anything you would find in a suburban cul-de-sac. And that's the point; its tagline, "A model for the mainstream," is a jab at more eccentric and expensive alternatives.

The race to make the first successful electric car may hinge on what engineers call "the pack"—the intricate bundle of batteries that is the most temperamental equipment on board. If the pack is too big, the car will be too pricey; if the pack is too small, or of poor design, it will drive like a golf cart. "Batteries are a lot like people," Phil Gow, Coda's chief battery engineer, told me when I visited the Tianjin factory, a ninety-minute drive from Beijing. "They want to have a certain temperature range. They're finicky." To explain, Gow, a Canadian, who is bald and has a goatee, led me to one of Lishen's production lines, similar to the car-battery line that will be fully operational next year. Workers in blue uniforms and blue hairnets were moving in swift precision around long temperature-controlled assembly lines, sealed off from dust and contamination by glass walls.

The workers were making laptop batteries—pinkie-size cylinders, to be lined up and encased in the familiar plastic brick. The system is similar for batteries tiny enough for an iPod or big enough for a car. Conveyor belts carried long, wafer-thin strips of metal into printing-press-like rollers, which coated them with electrode-active material. Another machine sandwiched the strips between razor-thin layers of plastic, and wound the whole stack together into a tight "jelly roll," a cylinder that looked, for the first time, like a battery. (Square cell-phone batteries are just jelly rolls squashed.)

A slogan on the wall declared "Variation Is the Biggest Enemy of Quality." Gow nodded at it gravely. A bundle of batteries is only as good as its weakest cell; if a coating is five-millionths of a metre too thin or too thick, a car could be a lemon. The new plant will have up to three thousand workers on ten-hour shifts, twenty hours a day. "When you get down to it, you can have ten people working in China for the cost of one person in



No more cover-ups.

It's not just subprime mortgages and derivative insurance that bury honesty in legal mumbo jumbo. A legal loophole allows some U.S. wines to masquerade as something they're not.

There are many fine sparkling wines, but only those from **Champagne** can use that region's name. Names of American wine regions like Napa Valley and Willamette are also misused.

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the U.S.," Mark Atkeson, the head of Coda's China operations, said.

It was easy to see China's edge in the operation. Upstairs, Gow and Atkeson showed me America's edge: their prototype of the pack. For two years, Coda's engineers in California and their collaborators around the world have worked on making it as light and powerful as possible—a life of "optimizing millimetres," as Gow put it. The result was a long, shallow aluminum case, measured to fit between the axles and jam-packed with seven hundred and twenty-eight rectangular cells, topped with a fibreglass case. It carried its own air-conditioning system, to prevent batteries from getting too cold or too hot. Rattling off arcane points, Gow caught himself. "There's hundreds of things that go into it, so there's hundreds of details," he said. "It's really a great field for people with O.C.D."

Czinger, in that sense, had found his niche. By November, he was crisscrossing the Pacific, leading design teams on both sides; in the months since we first met, he had grown only more evangelical in his belief that, if Americans would stop feeling threatened by China's progress on clean technology, they might glimpse their own strengths. Only his American engineers, he said, had the garage-innovation culture to spend "eighteen hours a day for two years to develop a new technology." But only in China had he discovered "the will to spend on infrastructure, and to do it at high speed." The result, he said, was a "state-of-the-art battery facility that was, two years ago, an empty field!"

America has a tradition of overestimating its rivals, and China is a convenient choice these days. But, as with Japan's a generation ago, China's rapid advances in science and technology obscure some deeper limitations. In 2004, a group of U.S.-based Chinese scientists accused the 863 Program of cronyism, of funnelling money into pet projects and unworthy labs. (A proverb popular among scientists goes, "Pavilions near the water receive the most moonlight.") When critics published their complaints in a Chinese-language supplement to the journal *Nature*, the government banned it. Less than two years later, Chen Jin, a star researcher at Shanghai Jiaotong University, who had received more than ten million dollars in grants to produce a Chinese microchip to rival Intel's, was discovered to have faked his results. It confirmed what many Chinese scientists said among themselves: the Chinese science system was riddled with plagiarism, falsified data, and conflicts of interest.

After the Chen Jin scandal, the 863 Program made changes. It began publishing tenders on the Web, to invite broader participation, and, to cut down on conflicts of interest, it started assigning evaluators randomly. But those measures couldn't solve a larger problem: the system that allowed China to master the production of wind turbines and batteries does not necessarily equip China to invent the energy technology that nobody has yet imagined. "Add as many mail coaches as you please, you will never get a railroad," the economist Joseph Schumpeter once wrote. Scale is not a substitute for radical invention, and the Chinese bureaucracy chronically discourages risk. In 1999, the government launched a small-business innovation fund, for instance, but its bureaucratic DNA tells it to place only safe bets. "They are concerned that, given that it's a public fund, if their failure rate is very high the review will not be very good and the public will say, 'Hey, you're wasting money,' " Xue Lan, the dean of the school of public policy at Tsinghua University, told me. "But a venture capitalist would say, 'It is natural that you'll have a lot of failures.' " Financing is not the only barrier to innovation. As an editorial last year in *Nature* put it, "An even deeper question is whether a truly vibrant scientific culture is possible without a more widespread societal commitment to free expression."

The Obama Administration is busy repairing the energy legacy of its predecessor. The stimulus package passed in February put more than thirty-eight billion dollars into the Department of Energy for renewable-energy projects—including four hundred million for ARPA-E, the agency that Bush opposed. (It also allocated a billion dollars toward reviving FutureGen, though a final decision is pending.)

In announcing the opening of ARPA-E, in April, Obama vowed to return America's investment in research and development to a level not seen since the space race. "The nation that leads the world in twenty-first-century clean energy will be the nation that leads in the twenty-first-century global economy," he said. "I believe America can and must be that nation."

An uninspiring version of that message is gaining currency in Congress; it frames American leadership as manifesting not so much the courage to seize the initiative as the determination to prevent others from doing so. Senator Charles Schumer, one of several lawmakers who have begun to cast China's role in environmental technology as a threat to American jobs, has warned the Obama Administration not to provide stimulus funds to a wind farm in Texas, because many of the turbines would be made in China. ("We should not be giving China a head start in this race at our own country's expense," Schumer said in a statement.) Senators John Kerry and Lindsey Graham, in an Op-Ed in the *Times*, vowed not to "surrender our marketplace to countries that do not accept environmental standards," and suggested a "border tax" on clean-energy technology.

The larger fact, however, is that no single nation is likely to dominate the clean-energy economy. Goldwind, Coda, and the Thermal Power Research Institute are hybrids of Western design and Chinese production, and no nation has yet mastered both the invention and the low-cost manufacturing of clean technology. It appears increasingly clear that winners in the new-energy economy will exploit the strengths of each side. President Obama seems inclined toward this view. When he visited Beijing in November, he and Hu Jintao cut several deals to share energy technology and know-how which will accelerate progress in both countries. This was hardly a matter of handing technology to China; under one of the deals, for instance, the Missouri-based company Peabody Energy purchased a stake in GreenGen, so that it can obtain data from, and lend ex-

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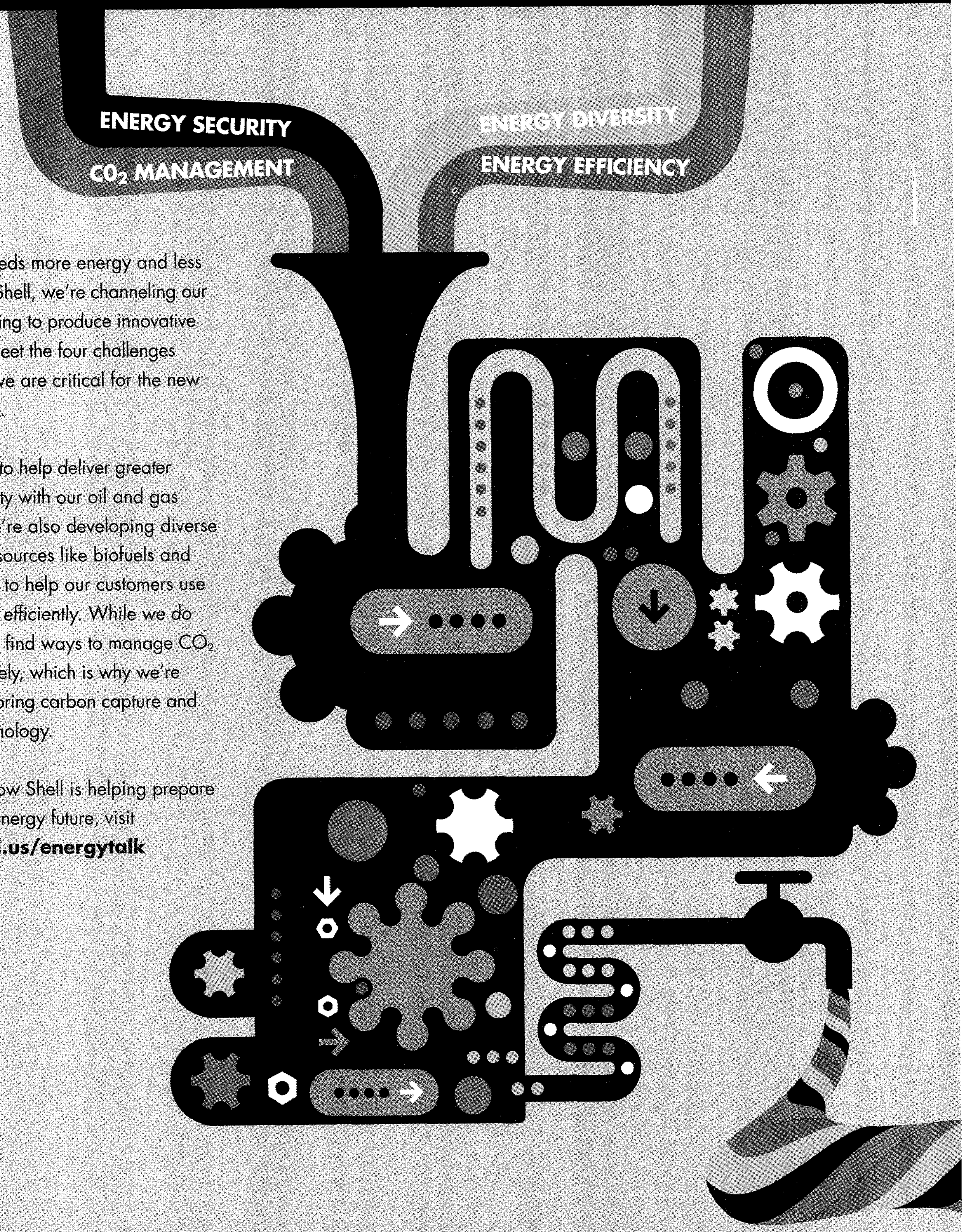

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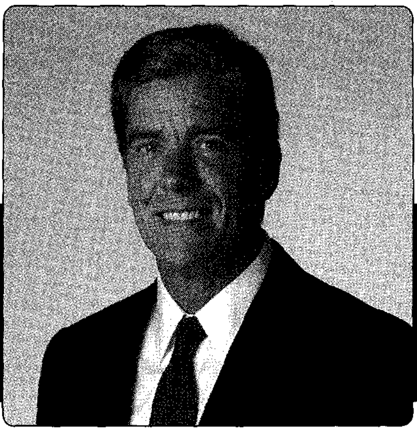

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARVIN E. ODUM, PRESIDENT, SHELL OIL COMPANY
Marvin E. Odum oversees business operations for North and South America. He holds positions of board leadership and participation in the Business Roundtable, Council of the Americas, and the U.S. Climate Action partnership, as well as serving as commissioner on the Aspen Institute's Dialogue and Commission on Arctic Climate Change.

How are global energy demands increasing, and what can we do to meet these needs?

When we look at the energy picture from a global perspective, it seems clear that by mid-century, energy demand could double from what it is today. This sets up significant challenges that must be addressed. First, how do we create enough energy to satisfy global demand? Second, how quickly can we bring alternative energy to market? And finally, and perhaps the most important challenge—how can we do all of this in ways that don't place more of a burden on the environment?

It is clear that oil and natural gas will have to shoulder a large part of the energy mix now and into the future. Alternative sources of energy will not by themselves play a significant role for perhaps decades to come. That's regardless of how badly one wants other forms of energy to step in and fill the gap as we transition to a lower carbon-intensive energy mix.

One important factor is determining the pace at which society can develop other energy sources that are affordable and technologically feasible. Our own research shows that alternatives and renewables could supply thirty to forty percent of the world's energy needs by 2050. But when you consider the growing energy needs of the developing world, you can see the continuing importance of oil and natural gas in that story line.

The other very important aspect to consider is climate change. We must continue to develop mitigation technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, to lower the CO_2 intensity of oil and natural gas. We will need to use this and other methods if we want to reach the CO_2 reduction goals that are being talked about in this country and in other nations around the world.

The reality is that we have to make responsible use of the earth's precious natural resources, including the ones used in renewable energy technologies. Make no mistake: it will take huge efforts by scientists, engineers, and policymakers to help us meet this new energy challenge.

If we need to drill, how can we do so safely and efficiently?

The oil and natural gas industry has made impressive technological, operational and environmental advances over the past decades. For example, some of the new deepwater projects currently under development generate a comparatively small visible footprint. Shell's Perdido project in the Gulf of Mexico, for example, is due to come online sometime early next year. This state-of-the-art facility is a technological wonder, which allows us to use just one platform on the water's surface to access oil and natural gas resources within a thirty-mile radius. This is just one example of companies like Shell working to meet some of the world's most difficult and exciting challenges through technology innovation—which is at the heart of addressing our growing energy needs at a much reduced environmental cost.

What are some of the new energy sources that Shell is developing?

We are involved in a number of alternative-energy efforts, including wind, biofuels, hydrogen, and others. Today, Shell is a market leader in the biofuels space; we distribute more biofuels than any other company. We see biofuels as having the capacity to impact global need the earliest. Biofuels also provide a good fit with the capabilities we have as a company, delivering energy across the value chain of manufacturing, distribution, and retail.

At the same time, we have a significant portfolio in wind. Our biggest focus is in North America—with eight projects up and running with our partners. The total production from those wind projects in the United States is around nine hundred megawatts of clean, renewable energy.

As you can see, we are in the business of a number of different forms of energy and on a global scale. In 2009 alone, Shell will have invested thirty-one billion dollars—one of the largest programs of any company in the world—in bringing new energy sources to consumers. Clearly, most of those dollars are going to oil and natural gas projects that are coming on line over the next few years. We have under construction something on the order of a million barrels a day of new oil and gas capacity, which is large by any standard.

What are the most urgent energy issues facing the United States today?

It is clear to me that our country needs an energy policy, a strategy—of how to meet our growing energy needs. That policy cannot be made in the absence of a climate discussion. I see those issues coming together at the same time. If policymakers choose to pursue the incentivization of alternative energies, the development of new technologies, and the creation of green jobs for the future, they need to answer the question "Where will our nation get its energy in the meantime?" Clearly, oil and natural gas have a critical role to play.

Another issue comes from recognition that today we import sixty percent of our oil. We have the ability to produce much more domestically, in ways that are environmentally responsible. If the oil and natural gas industry are allowed greater access, particularly to outer continental shelf resources, we can offset our oil imports, create new, high-wage jobs, and improve our balance of trade. Of course, we want to complement such activities with the continued development of alternative and renewable energy.

Please visit **www.shell.com** for more information about Shell pertise to, a cutting-edge Chinese power plant.

More important, the two Presidents reignited hopes that climate negotiations this month in Copenhagen, which had been heading for failure, might reach a meaningful compromise. Days after the Beijing summit, China and the U.S. provided specific targets for controlling emissions. Their pledges were far from bold, and left both sides open to criticism: China's emissions, after all, will continue to grow over time, and cuts pledged by the U.S. still fall far short of what scientists say is required to avert the worst effects of warming. Yet the commitments, for all their weakness, serve a crucial function: They prevent each side from using the other as a foil to justify inaction.

For the U.S. and China, the climate talks boil down to how much money the rich world will give poorer nations to help them acquire the technology to limit emissions and cope with the droughts, rising sea levels, and other effects caused by those who enjoyed two hundred years of burning cheap fossil fuels. Without sharing costs and technology, it is not at all clear, for instance, that China will invest in the holy grail of climate science: funnelling greenhouse gases underground. The process, known as carbon capture and storage, or C.C.S., is so difficult and expensive that nobody has yet succeeded in using it on a large scale. Like electric cars and coal gasification, C.C.S. would be cheaper to develop in China than in the U.S., but China is not interested in paying for it alone. As long as a Chinese citizen earns less than one-seventh what his counterpart in America earns, China is unlikely to back down on the demand that it should be paid to slow down its economy and invest even more in energy technology. And on that point the sides remain far apart.

In November, I was spending much of my time at Tsinghua University, a center of clean-tech research, seeing a string of new energy projects that might or might not succeed someday. (My favorite, science aside, is a biofuel based on the process of producing Chinese moonshine.) In a giant, bustling convention hall across town, models in slinky evening gowns and white fur stoles arrayed themselves around mockups of wind turbines as if they were hot rods. Beijing was so overrun with visiting MacArthur geniuses and Nobel laureates and Silicon Valley eminences, all angling to influence China's climate-change policy, that I had to triage conferences.

Traffic alone made it hard to get around. This year, China overtook the United States as the world's largest car market, and much of Beijing is gridlocked every day. (Impossibly, the number of cars in the city is expected to double in seven years.) In desperation, I decided to buy an electric bicycle. China has put a hundred million of them on the road in barely ten years, an unplanned phenomenon that, energy experts point out, happens to be a milestone: the world's first electric vehicle to go mass market. The 863 Program noticed, and last year it added a program to build a micro-electric car, inspired by bicycle components, for commuters. Researchers at Tsinghua did just that, by attaching four electric-bike motors to a chassis. "We call it the Hali," Ouyang Minggao, the Tsinghua professor in charge of it, told me. They took the name from the Chinese translation of "Harry Potter." The car is tiny and bulbous, and is being road-tested near Shanghai.

Hunting for an e-bike, I ended up at a string of shops near the Tsinghua campus, where each storefront offered a competing range of prices and styles to a clientele dominated by students and young families. I settled on a model called the Turtle King—a simple contraption, black and styled like a Vespa, with a five-hundred-watt brushless motor and disk brakes. Built of plastic to save weight, it was more akin to a scooter than to a bicycle, and it ran on a pair of lead-acid batteries, similar to those under the hood of a car. The salesman said that the bike would run for twenty to thirty miles, depending on how fast I went, before I would need to plug its cord into the wall for eight hours or lug the batteries inside to charge. With a top speed of around twenty-five miles per hour, it would do little for the ego, but, at just over five hundred dollars, it was worth a try.

The manager rang up the sale, and I chatted with two buyers who were students at the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. "You must have tons of these in the U.S., because you're always talking about environmental consciousness," one of them, an industrial-design major wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt, said. Not really, I told him; American drivers generally use bikes for exercise, not transportation. He looked baffled. Around his campus and others in Beijing, electric bikes are as routine as motorcycles are in the hill towns of Italy.

I eased the Turtle King down over the curb and accelerated to full speed, such as it was. I threaded through an intersection clotted with honking traffic, and the feeling, I discovered, was sublime. The Turtle King was addictive. I began riding it everywhere, showing up early for appointments, flush with efficiency and a soupçon of moral superiority. For years, people had abandoned Beijing's bicycle lanes in favor of cars, but now the bike lanes were alive again, in an unruly showcase of innovation. Young riders souped up their bikes into status symbols, pulsing with flashing lights and subwoofers; construction workers drove them like mules, laden down to the axles with sledgehammers and drills and propane tanks; parents with kids' seats on the back drifted through rush-hour traffic and reached school on time. Before long, I was coveting an upgrade to a lithium-ion battery, which is lighter and runs longer. (Lithium-ion batteries have sparked interest in electric bikes in the West. They are a high-minded new accessory in Paris, and more than a few have even turned up in America.)

As a machine, the Turtle King was in desperate need of improvement. The chintzy horn broke the first day. The battery never went as far as advertised, and it was so heavy that I narrowly missed breaking some toes as it crashed to the ground on the way into the living room. Soon, the sharp winter wind in Beijing was testing my commitment to transportation al fresco. And yet, for all its imperfections, the Turtle King was so much more practical than sitting in a stopped taxi or crowding onto a Beijing bus that it had become what all new-energy technology is somehow supposed to be: cheap, simple, and unobtrusive enough so that using it is no longer a matter of sacrifice but one of self-interest. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/GO/CHINA
Video: Evan Osnos rides his Turtle King.

EXPLORE: AMERICAN AIRLINES

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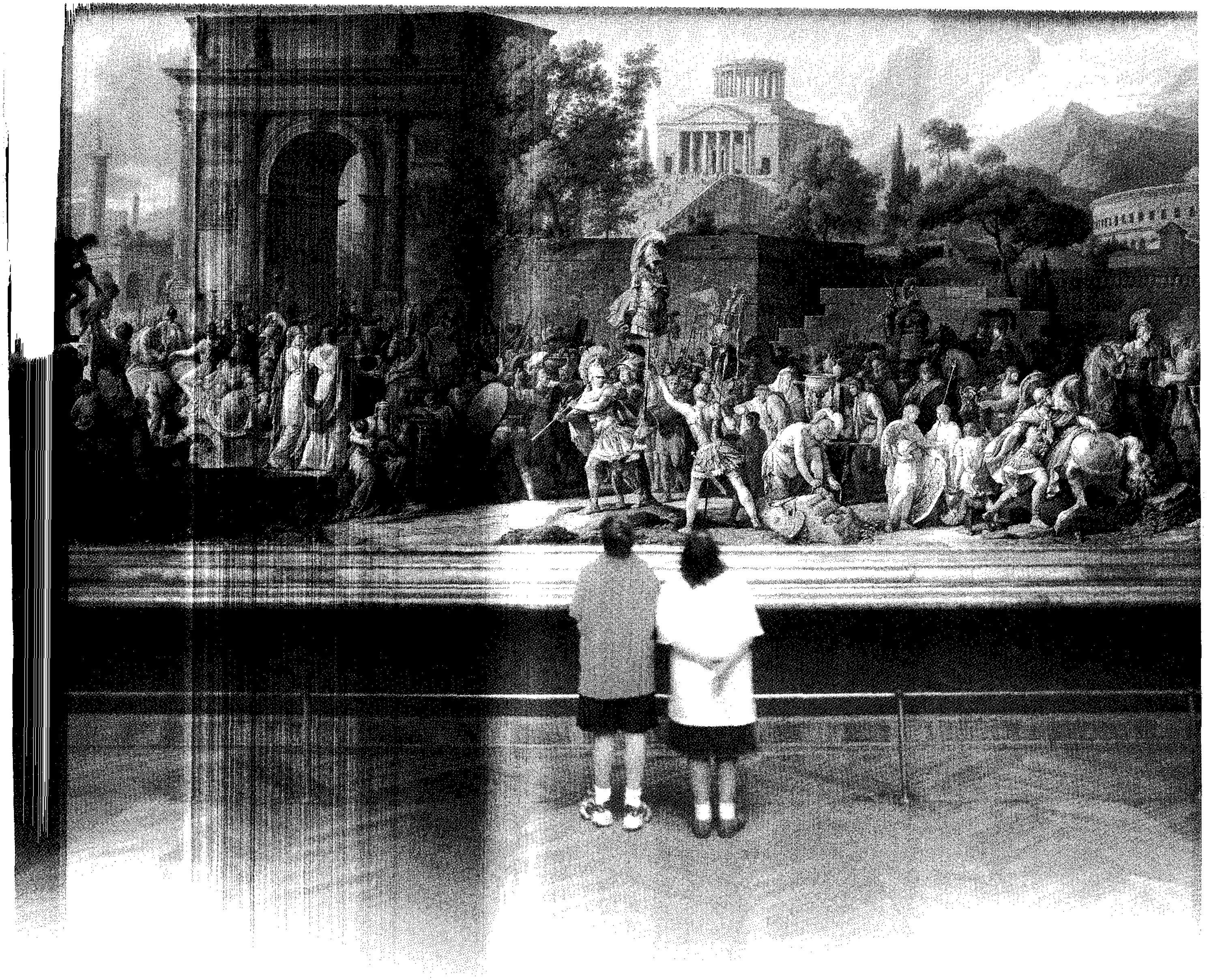

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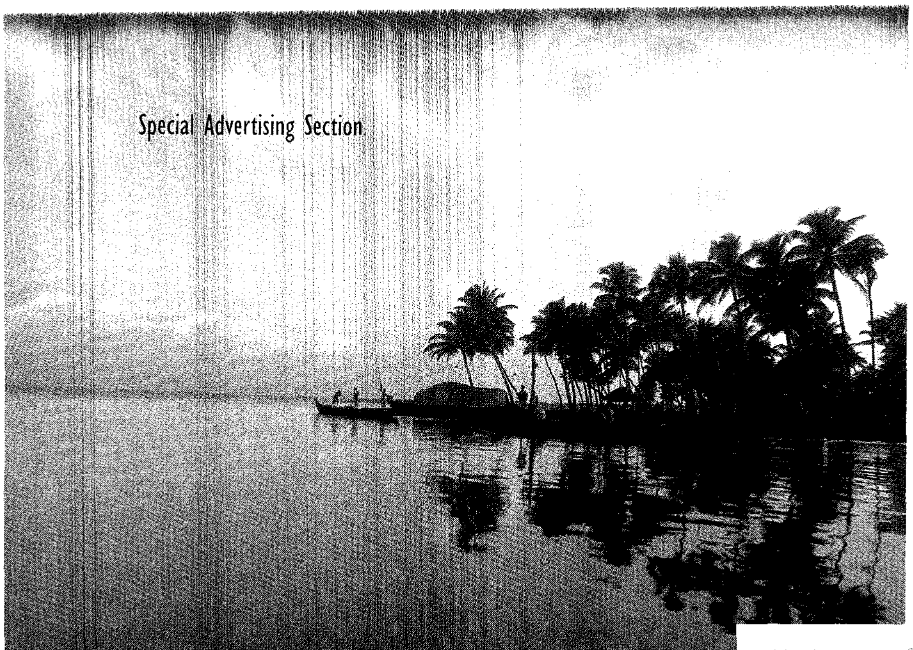
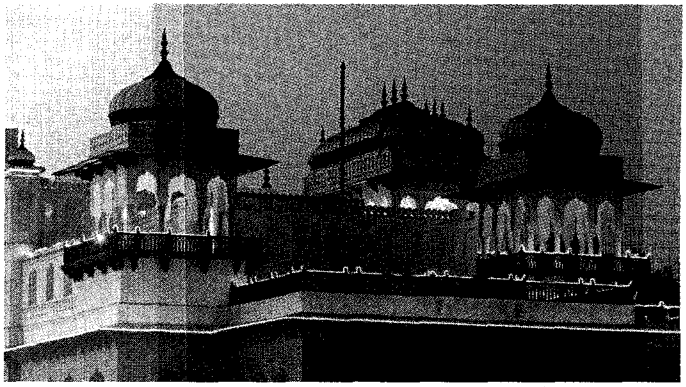


EXPLORE: INDIA

JOURNEY TO WELLNESS



Elegant and cooling palms set the stage for serenity and holistic healing at Kerala's Coconut Lagoon *(top, left)*. Jaipur's exquisite Taj Hotel *(above)* combines luxury with rejunvenation that's suitable for a royal.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: COCONUT LAGOON SEASCAPE ©DINODIA IMAGES/ALAMY; SERENITY THROUGH YOGA ©ASIA IMAGES GROUP/ALAMY; RAMBAGH PALACE EXTERIOR ©DANITA DELIMONT/ALAMY

The quest for a sense of well-being and health has led many travelers to India. The ancient traditions of Ayurveda and yoga are an important part of the country's fabric of life, having originated there and been practiced for thousands of years. Often they are practiced together, offering the combined opportunities of Ayurvedic herbal treatments, thought to promote natural balance, and the physical and mental engagement of yoga. Those seeking a quiet respite can stay in an Ayurvedic center for rejuvenation therapy or they can receive treatments by Ayurvedic practitioners for a variety of challenges, including overworked joints or insomnia. Others choose a hotel or spa that promises the restorative effects of Ayurvedic massage, which involves at least two masseurs in an invigorating application of herbal oils.

The state of Kerala, a fertile strip along the country's southwest coast, is the primary source of Ayurvedic herbs and the center of the practice. Here, the **Kalari Kovilakom** attracts devotees of the herbal remedies to its spa and treatment facilities, which are housed in an opulent nineteenth-century palace. The minimum stay is two weeks and each guest is prescribed a regimen, including an individualized vegetarian diet. More casual is the center's sister resort, **Coconut Lagoon**, accessible only by boat in the scenic south Keralan Backwaters region. It provides various rejuvenation packages at its Ayurveda spa. Flexible options for assorted beauty treatments and rejuvenating therapies are available in the fifty-acre setting of the **Kairali Ayurvedic Health Resort**.

The **AyurvedaGram** health resort was transplanted from Kerala to the outskirts of Bangalore in southern India. The resort's seven acres hold historic cottages and herb gardens moved from the coastal state to provide a charming setting near India's tech center. A menu of programs for stress management, spine and joint care, and yoga and meditation is offered. About an hour east of the city, the **Soukya** holistic health center provides both day and residential access to healing activities and experts in Ayurveda, homeopathy, and naturopathy; vegetarian meals are made with produce from the spa's own organic farm.

On Arossim Beach in South Goa, guests can look out at the Arabian Sea from rooms with Internet access at the **Park Hyatt Goa** resort and retire to the **Sereno Spa** for customized therapies inspired by Ayurvedic and Yogic traditions; packages range from five to twenty-one days. The smaller, all-suite **Pousada Tauma** hotel in northern Goa welcomes you to an Ayurvedic spa in a garden setting with a complete range of treatments, including massage and diet.

In the northern city of Jaipur, guests at the **Rambagh Palace**, a Taj hotel, check into the splendor of a former maharajah's residence and then are brought even further back in time by the extensive offerings of Ayurvedic therapies and yoga at the newly launched **Jiva Grande Spa**. The hotel calls the experience "the essence of traditional royal wellness," and it dissolves, at least for a while, all the stresses of modernity.

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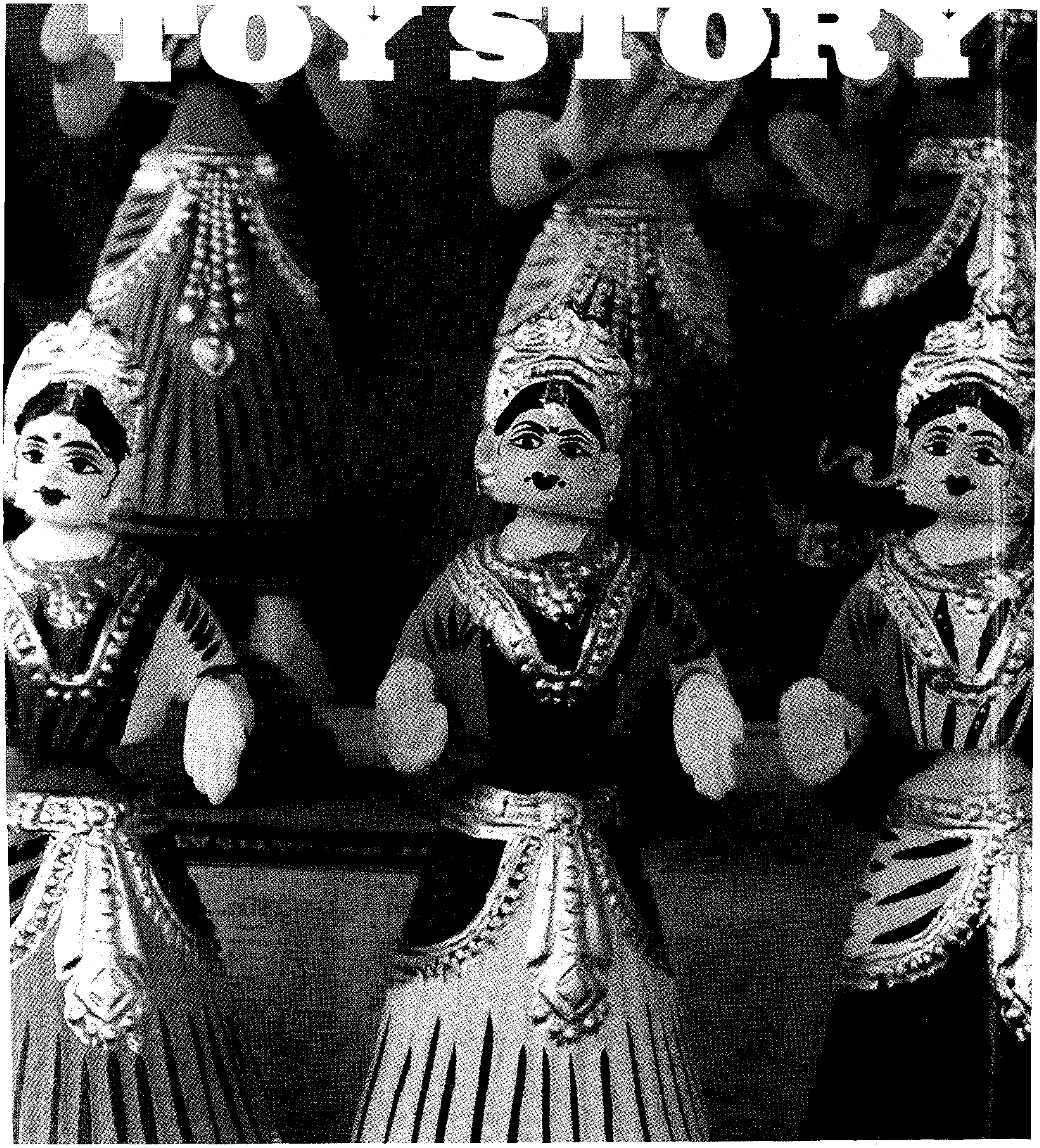

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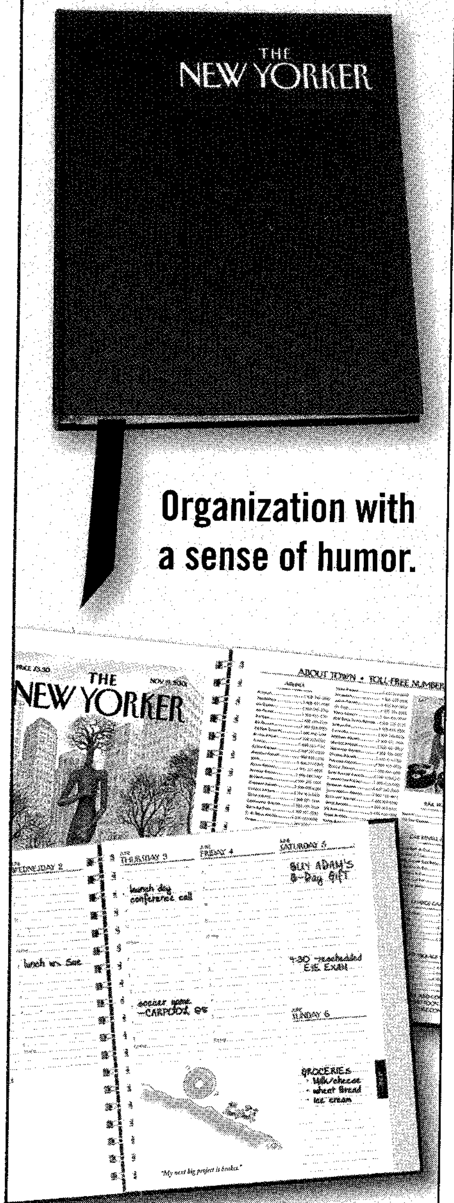

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HOLLY OR CHALLAH?

BY PAUL RUDNICK

Just because anyone with half a brain celebrates Christmas, no one should ever use the holiday to make non-Christians feel uncomfortable. Here are some tips to help the sensitive Christian make everyone, no matter what they're wearing on their head, feel at ease and have a Happy Interfaith Holiday Season!

1. When non-Christians are present, don't call Jesus "Our Saviour," "Our Lord," or "Mister Perfect." Refer to him more casually, as "the Son of God, or maybe not," "the Jew that got away," or "the bachelor." When chatting with Jews, try to avoid the subject of the death of Jesus. If a Jew asks, "So how did Jesus die?," simply reply, "Natural causes."

2. Don't refer to Christmas as a day to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Instead, try calling it "the world's day off" or "a big party for almost everyone." Instead of saying "Merry Christmas!," try calling out, "The plain wrapping paper is right over there in the corner!"

3. If you're visiting a mixed couple during the holidays, here are a couple of gift suggestions: for the Christian wife, a bayberry-scented candle or a fresh evergreen wreath; for the Jewish husband, a lovely framed portrait of his parents, rending their clothes and sobbing.

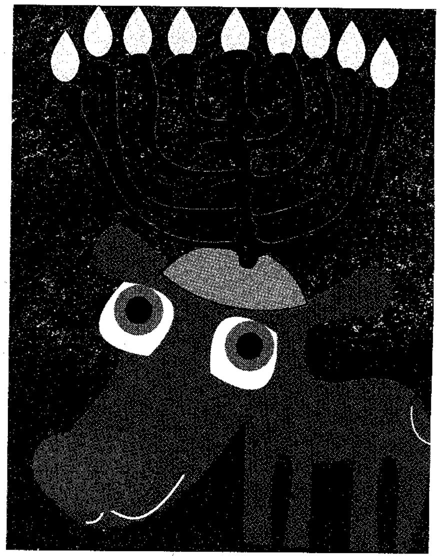
4. Try to take a delighted interest in the Jewish holidays by asking questions like "Do you ever create a tiny Victorian village under your menorah?," "Does your family sing 'Silent Night' in Hebrew?," and "When you were little, did you ever wonder if Santa hated you?"

5. When you're walking down the street with a Jewish friend and you pass a sidewalk Santa, say something comforting, like "Jesus barely knew him," or "I bet you liked sitting on the big rabbi's lap." You might even introduce Santa to your friend by saying, "Santa, this is Richard Weiner. And it really doesn't matter if he's been bad or good."

6. On Christmas Eve, why not remind Jewish children to leave out milk and cookies for Mayor Bloomberg?

7. For a jolly holiday film festival, invite your Jewish neighbors over and screen "White Christmas," "Miracle on 34th Street," and "Munich."

8. When a Jewish friend compliments your Christmas tree, modestly reply, "Oh, but it's not as nice as your couch."



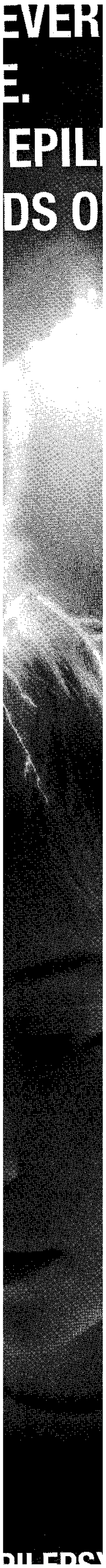
LAURIE ROSENWALD

9. Change the words to popular Christmas songs, as in "Frosty the Orthodox Rebbe," "Deck the Halls with Photos of Your Many Beautiful Grandchildren," and "I Saw Mommy Kissing Our Accountant."

10. Never refer to Hanukkah as "their Christmas," "Merry Wannabe," or "the Goldberg variation."

11. For real holiday enchantment, tell your kids the story of "Yussel, the Reindeer Who Spent the Whole Night Studying."

12. If your town wants to put up a life-size crèche on public property, suggest that there should also be, right beside the Nativity scene, mannequins representing a Jewish family, sitting outside the manger and reading the Sunday *Times*. ♦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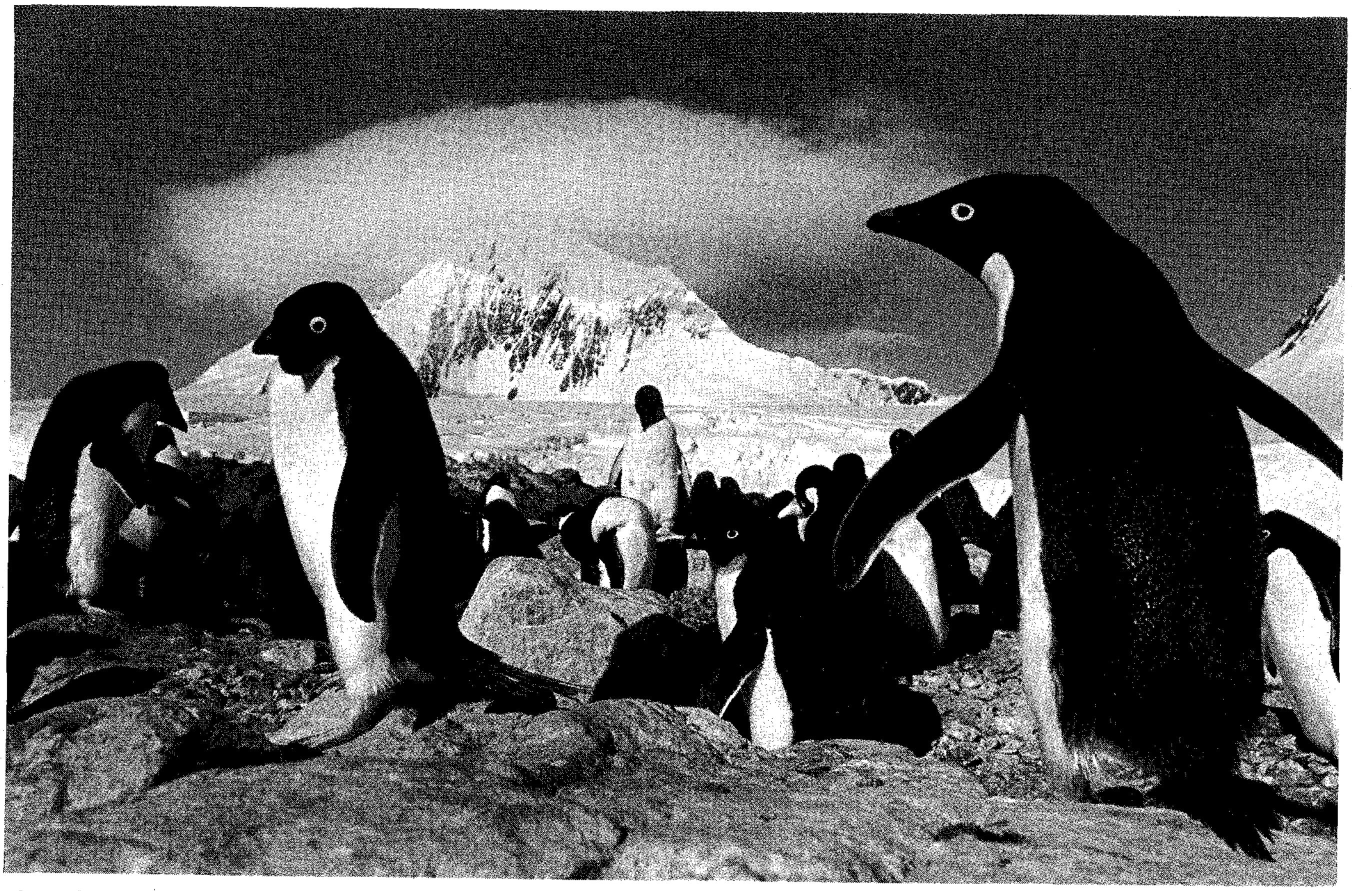
OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

THE ICE RETREAT

Global warming and the Adélie penguin.

BY FEN MONTAIGNE

Litchfield Island is an outcropping of granite and diorite rising out of the Southern Ocean off the coast of the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula, which juts toward the tip of South America. With dark, snow-streaked ridges flowing into broad, pebbled beaches, Litchfield is picturesque, but amid the imposing Antarctic landscape the island—not quite three-quarters of a mile long and half a mile wide—hardly merits a second glance. To the north, on Anvers Island, the dome of the Marr Ice Piedmont—a glacier roughly forty miles long and twenty miles across at its widest point—dominates the horizon. To the east, forming the spine of the nine-hundred-mile-long Antarctic Peninsula, lies a towering mountain range of sheer black rockfaces and ice fields streaming to the sea. And to the south and west, stretching to the horizon, are innumerable icebergs, their shapes running from flat-topped slabs to whimsical, castle-like structures.



A steady loss of sea ice along the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula prevents Adélies reaching some of their richest feeding grounds.

PETER ESSICK/AURORA PHOTOS

On an overcast January morning, with the temperature just below freezing, Bill Fraser, an ecologist and penguin expert, eased a rubber Zodiac boat onto Litchfield's shore. Grasping the bowline, I leaped onto the rocks and was quickly joined by Fraser, who lashed the rope around a boulder, flung an iridescent-orange flotation coat onto the stony ground, and began walking across the eastern third of the island. It had been two years since Fraser set foot on Litchfield, and he had come to see what remained of a once thriving rookery of Adélies—the classic tuxedoed penguin, and one of only two penguin species that breed exclusively in Antarctica. (The other is the emperor penguin.)

Fraser paused amid an expanse of pebbles, nearly the size of a football field, that were used by the few remaining Adélie penguins to construct their cup-shaped nests. "Everywhere you see these rocks, there used to be penguins," Fraser said. "All these areas used to be colonies. There was a colony here, there, over there."

Studies of Adélie bones buried under layers of guano have shown that penguins have nested on Litchfield Island since at least the sixteenth century. When Fraser first arrived in the region, in 1974, as a graduate student, the island's penguin rookery had nine hundred breeding pairs. Over the years, the number of Adélies had fallen to a few dozen breeding pairs, and a census conducted earlier that season by a birding team that Fraser led indicated that the rookery was on the verge of disappearing.

Still, he was not prepared for the scene

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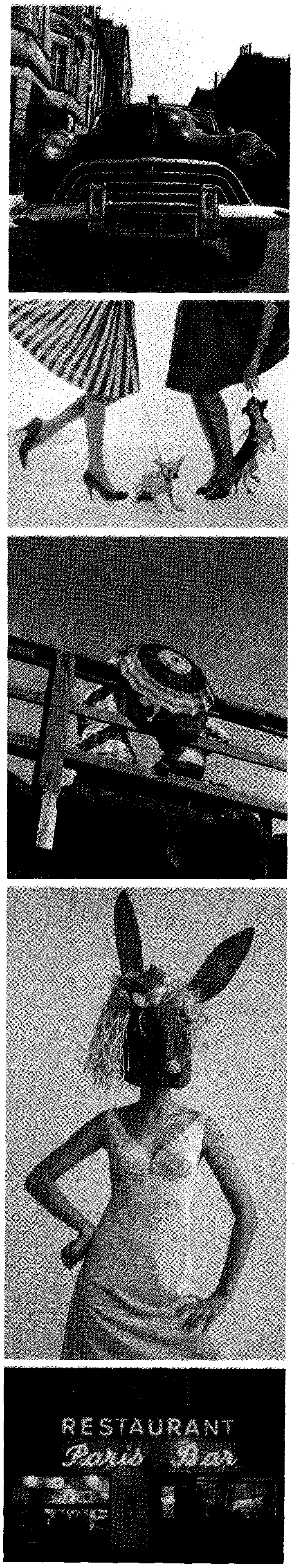

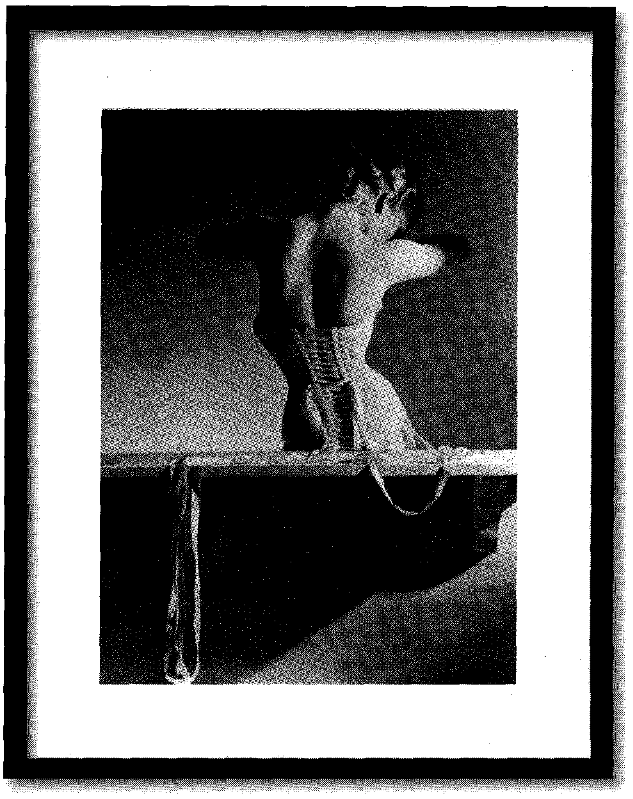

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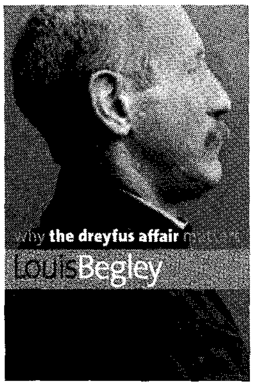
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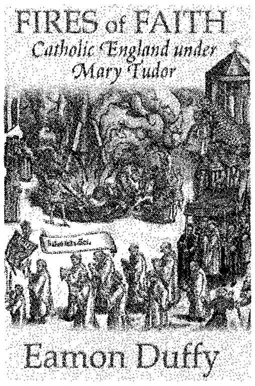
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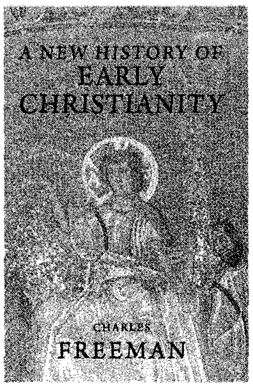
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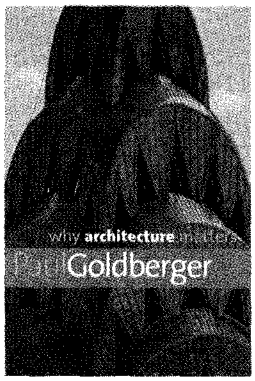
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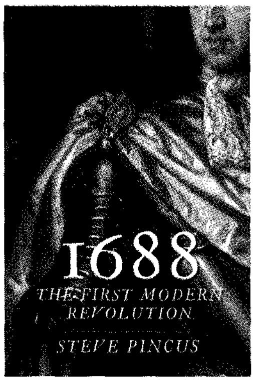
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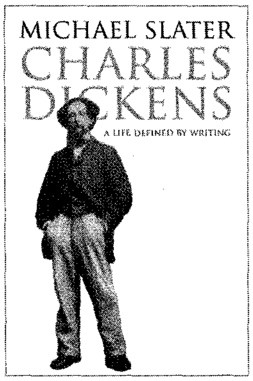
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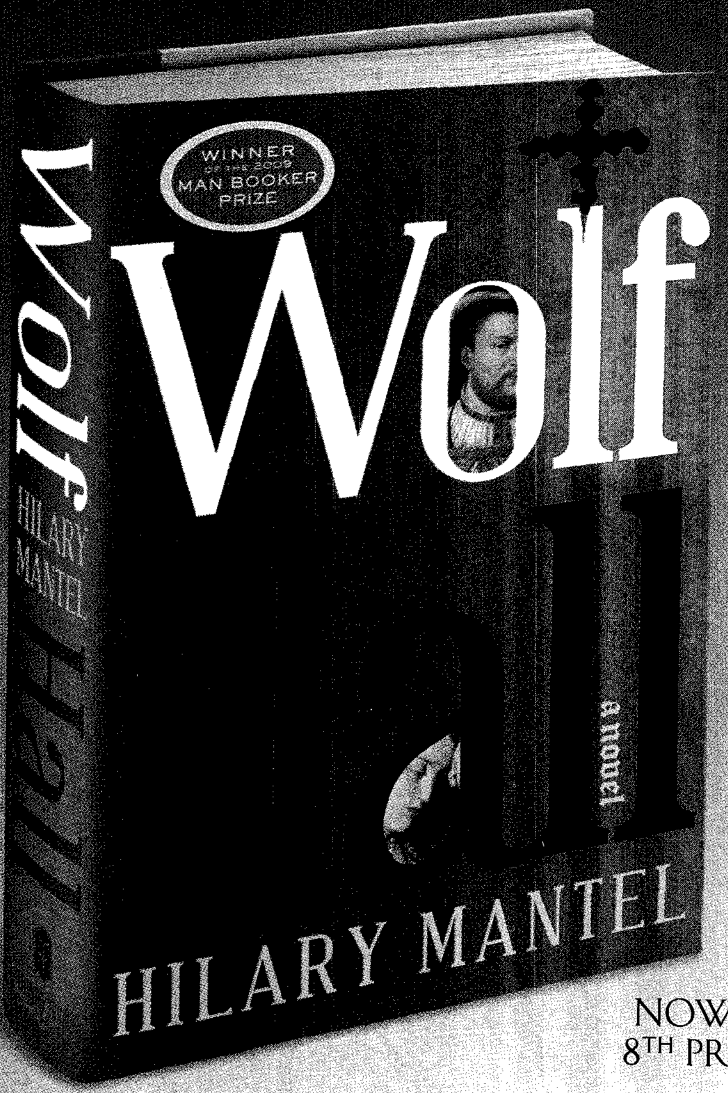
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that greeted him on Litchfield's southern shore: only five Adélie nests remained, containing seven fluffy chicks—no taller than a man's hand—and eleven adult Adélies, which reached a person's knee. They were huddled on an oval-shaped patch of stones, twenty-five feet across at its widest point. Some of the chicks had burrowed under their parents, seeking the warmth of the brood patch—a four-inch slit that covers the eggs with bare, blood-engorged skin. (The heat of the brood patch enables Adélies to incubate their eggs at 86 degrees Fahrenheit.) Other chicks, with light-gray down and black heads, stood and stretched their necks skyward, greedily accepting from a parent a meal of regurgitated krill, a shrimplike creature. This last Adélie redoubt on Litchfield Island was known as Colony 8.

Fraser shook his head and said, "This is unbelievable. Colony 8 used to have so many birds you could barely count them."

As we returned to the boat, Fraser said that a few dozen adults, some possibly as old as fifteen to twenty years, kept returning to their ancestral breeding grounds. But Adélies have evolved as an ice-dependent species, and, in the rapidly warming environment of the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula, many of the adults—and nearly all their chicks—were not surviving the winter.

"Litchfield is looking miserable," Fraser said. "When this colony goes, it will be the first time in at least five hundred years that there will be no Adélies on the island."

In the austral summer of 2005-06, I spent nearly five months as a member of Bill Fraser's birding team at Palmer Station, a scrap of civilization grafted onto a rocky spit of land. It is named for an early-nineteenth-century American seal hunter, Nathaniel B. Palmer, who at age twenty left Stonington, Connecticut, in command of a small sloop, the Hero, sailed the length of the planet, crossed the wild stretch of ocean known as the Drake Passage, and entered the foggy, iceberg-covered Antarctic waters in search of fur seals.

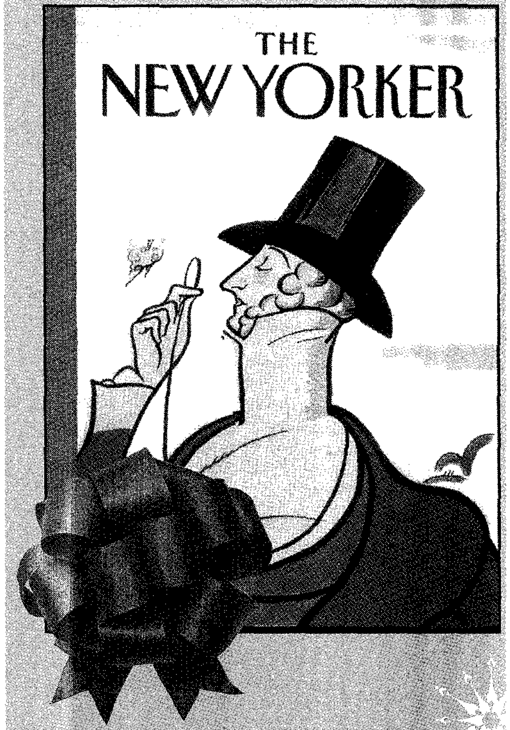
The U.S. government research station named in Palmer's honor is a cluster of half a dozen corrugated-metal buildings that, at peak times, house forty scientists and support staff. The tiny base—described by one early visitor as an "insolent blot" on the Antarctic landscape—is situated in the midst of numerous small islands that are home to Adélie-penguin rookeries.

One evening, soon after I arrived at Palmer, I hiked up the Marr Ice Piedmont, just behind the station. Though it was only three hundred feet above sea level, I gazed through the dust-free Antarctic atmosphere at mountain summits a hundred and twenty miles away. Close to shore, the sea ice was loosely packed, and the placid pools of water at the base of the Marr glacier reflected the pale-blue walls of the ice piedmont. Beyond the nearby islands, the sea ice was a cool, blue-white table that ran to the horizon. A closer look revealed that its surface was composed of small slabs of sea ice pushed together by persistent winds. A penguin had recently tobogganed across the glacier, its flippers slicing knifelike slits in the snow.

Aerial photographs taken in 1963 show that the Marr Ice Piedmont once engulfed nearly the entire point on which Palmer Station now stands. Since that time, however, the glacier has retreated roughly fifteen hundred feet. In the nineteen-seventies and eighties, Fraser and others used to climb the Marr Ice Piedmont and ski to places such as Biscoe Point, eight miles away. That is virtually impossible now, as the thinning glacier is riven by crevasses and is falling back from the coastline in large, scalloped chunks.

Fraser has spent most of the past thirty-five years working in Antarctica, more time than almost any other U.S. scientist. He and his fellow-researchers at Palmer are mainly engaged in studying the effects of the rapid warming on the formation of sea ice, on the phytoplankton and Antarctic krill that depend on the sea ice, and on the Adélie penguins that rely on the sea ice and the krill. Fraser's work is part of the Long Term Ecological Research Network, a program, launched in 1980 by the National Science Foundation, that chronicles environmental changes in twenty-six ecosystems around the world.

Much attention has been paid to the warming of the Arctic, where for three decades scientists have been tracking the rapid retreat of summer sea ice and



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the melting of glaciers. But the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula has heated up faster than almost any other place on earth, as temperate air has streamed in from the north and warming ocean currents have swept along the peninsula. From 1951 to the present, the average annual air temperature in the region has increased by nearly five degrees. Winter temperatures have soared about eleven degrees over the past six decades—five times the global average.

For the moment, rising temperatures are only nibbling at the edges of Antarctica's repository of ice, a vast dome of frozen precipitation—three miles thick in places—covering an area one and a half times the size of the United States. But increasing warmth will likely penetrate more deeply into Antarctica; a recent study forecasts that the entire continent will heat up by more than five degrees this century.

"The poles are very sensitive barometers of warming, and what we're looking at here on the Antarctic Peninsula is an entire ecosystem that is changing," Fraser said. "And it's not changing in hundreds of years—it's changing in thirty to fifty years. To me, this is foretelling the future across major parts of the planet."

In the fall of 1975, Bill Fraser—then a twenty-five-year-old graduate student at the University of Minnesota—sailed from Ushuaia, Argentina, to Antarctica aboard a hundred-and-twenty-five-foot research vessel, the R.V. Hero, named in honor of Nathaniel Palmer's sloop. It was his second trip to the continent. After weathering a gale in the Drake Passage, the Hero approached the relatively tranquil waters of the Bransfield Strait, which is sheltered from the Southern Ocean by the South Shetland Islands, at the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. Exhausted after several rough days of travel, Fraser went to sleep. The next morning, he awoke to unaccustomed stillness. The water was flat, and the only sound he heard was the drone of the Hero's diesel engine.

"I stepped out into this gray world," Fraser recalled. "It had been snowing heavily and the ship was moving through this three-to-four-inch layer of snow and slush on the water. There was snow all over the deck. It was incredibly foggy. And the ship was completely surrounded by snow petrels, one of the most beautiful birds in the world—absolutely white. When you see them, you know the ice is near."

After stopping at King George Island, in the South Shetlands, the Hero steamed toward Anvers Island, where Palmer Station is situated, at 64° S. The ship's progress was soon blocked by thick sea ice. Built for the National Science Foundation to supply Palmer Station and work along the Antarctic Peninsula, the Hero had an oak hull, overlain with a rock-hard layer of greenheart. The forward hull was sheathed in metal. But the Hero could not penetrate the sea ice surrounding the small American base. So Fraser disembarked and began heading toward Palmer Station on skis, carrying provisions and equipment behind him on a sled.

As Fraser glided swiftly over the surface, leopard seals—sleek, spotted predators that devour everything from krill to penguins—cruised under the ice, tracking his movements. Fraser could hear the leopard seals trilling low, droning calls beneath him, and occasionally a seal poked its head through an opening in the ice to observe the skiers. Leopard seals love ice, and they were a common feature around Palmer Station, lounging on floes, attacking Adélie penguins, trailing the rubber Zodiacs used by scientists, and occasionally biting a hole in one.

Fraser said of the peninsula, "It was completely remote and absolutely wild. The rawness and beauty of this place just cannot be described. It was a place where you could still feel inconsequential. You were part of a working system that paid you no mind."

Fraser spent thirteen months in Antarctica. Palmer Station had been in operation for only seven years, and the scientists and support staff lived in isolation, communicating with the outside world by ham radio. During the winter, Fraser and five other men manned the station, and no ships came or went. Fraser worked in the field, observing the behavior and foraging habits of one of the rare midwinter resident seabirds, the kelp gull. For recreation, he skied by himself into the frozen Southern Ocean. When the moon was full, bathing the ice in a ghostly blue light, Fraser skied for miles along the shore. He stopped from time to time and listened to the stillness, broken occasionally by the report of cracking ice.

"You start doing what you know you need to do to get through the winter," Fraser recalled. "You're taking care of your sanity. You knew you were there for the long haul. And the winters were a lot colder then."

During the summer months, Fraser and his fellow graduate students travelled from island to island, taking a census of Adélie-penguin rookeries. One of the largest was on Torgersen Island, half a mile from the station. On a January evening, when many of the adults were on the island feeding their chicks, more than twenty thousand Adélies of all ages mobbed Torgersen, their raspy calls splitting the air with a din that could be heard miles away.

"You'd see thousands of Adélies walking to and from the sea," Fraser said. "It was like ants in the forest—there was a constant stream of birds. Torgersen was an absolute mass of life. It just manifested the incredible productivity of this ocean and its ability to support life."

One of the defining features of Antarctica is the great skirt of sea ice that spreads out from the continent each year. At the end of the Southern Hemisphere's summer, in February, the sea ice girding the continent is roughly a million square miles. By September, the circle of sea ice around the continent has expanded six times—more than doubling the size of Antarctica itself. (Although sea ice has declined markedly along the western Antarctic Peninsula, it is increasing in some regions of Antarctica, most notably in the Ross Sea, because of changing atmospheric patterns.)

Once, on a midwinter cruise in the Weddell Sea, Fraser went to bed as a severe cold snap set in and woke up the next morning to find that the ice edge had spread outward by several miles. On the infrequent occasions when the sun was out—for about two hours around noon—Fraser could stand on the bridge and, as temperatures dropped, watch the sea ice form before his eyes.

"Suddenly, you'd see what looks like grease on the water, and then that would

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stop moving," Fraser said. "And, before you knew it, the sea was turning gray, gray, gray, and finally you would see an inch or so of ice just appear."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that human-induced global warming began to clearly impact the planet at about the time that Fraser first came to Palmer Station. But in 1974 few scholars were linking human activity with rising global temperatures. One of Fraser's professors at the University of Minnesota did discuss climate change, but told his students that it was unlikely they would witness its effects in their lifetimes.

Fraser, who is fifty-eight, is a lean and handsome man of six feet, with light-brown hair, a ruddy complexion, blue eyes, thin lips, and a cleft in his chin. After three decades of working in Antarctica, he has perfected his field outfit, wearing clothes that protect him from the elements yet do not leave him overheated during swift hikes across the terrain. During my season at Palmer Station, he wore a fleece sweater covered by a royal-blue windbreaker that was faded by the sun and ripped in places by bird beaks and rocks; rugged black rain pants heavily stained by guano and crusty with sea salt; and ankle-high leather hiking boots, deeply scarred by years of scrambling over Antarctic rocks.

At the rookeries on Litchfield and other islands, the Adélies paid us little attention as long as we stayed ten feet away. If you moved closer, you would be subjected to an array of elaborate threat displays, all exhaustively studied by scientists—a walleyed stare, or the raising of the feathers on the head into something resembling a flat-top haircut. If you moved closer still, some Adélies would charge and jam a sharp beak into your leg. (One day, a belligerent penguin bounded up to me and plunged its beak into the flesh below my knee. Like an awl, it penetrated my rain pants, thick fleece pants, long underwear, and skin, drawing blood.)

While Fraser occasionally uses high-tech tools in his research—such as tracking penguins by affixing satellite transmitters to their backs—most of his work involves spending long days in the field performing decidedly low-tech, repetitive tasks. He and his birding team measure snow depth, count penguins and seabirds, and sample guano to check what's in their diets.

He is assisted by a team of five young field workers. Though nearly all of them have a background in biology, Fraser is looking primarily for people who are amiable—working five months in the field, often ten to twelve hours a day, tests a team's cohesiveness—and in excellent physical condition. The birders were an outdoorsy and collegial group who often came to a decision when one member looked at another and said, "Your call."

Fraser is fiercely loyal to his squad of birders; unlike many field biologists, he provides health insurance to his seasonal field-team workers and contributes to their pension plans. At Palmer, he was keenly attuned to the dangers of exhaustion. Once, lost in thought near season's end, I walked too close to some giant petrels and spooked them. A day or two later, I wandered near a group of elephant seals wallowing at the edge of an Adélie colony, prompting two of them to slither rapidly away in panic and nearly crush to death several penguin chicks. As we walked back to our boat, Fraser pulled me aside and said, "I think you're getting burned out. I've noticed it for a while. You came out of the boat yesterday with a rope wrapped around your legs."

I apologized and told him I felt fine.

"You don't even know it's happening to you," he continued. "I saw one person, after four months here, literally step off the boat right into the water. I had to talk to you because when someone is like this he can easily get hurt himself or

MY CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND

I never climbed the hill
or strolled to the end of the pier
to see what the walkers in rain
might be finding out there.

Nor did the book fall open
where Maeve had secretly signed it.
In fact, it never fell open.
Not that I minded: the world

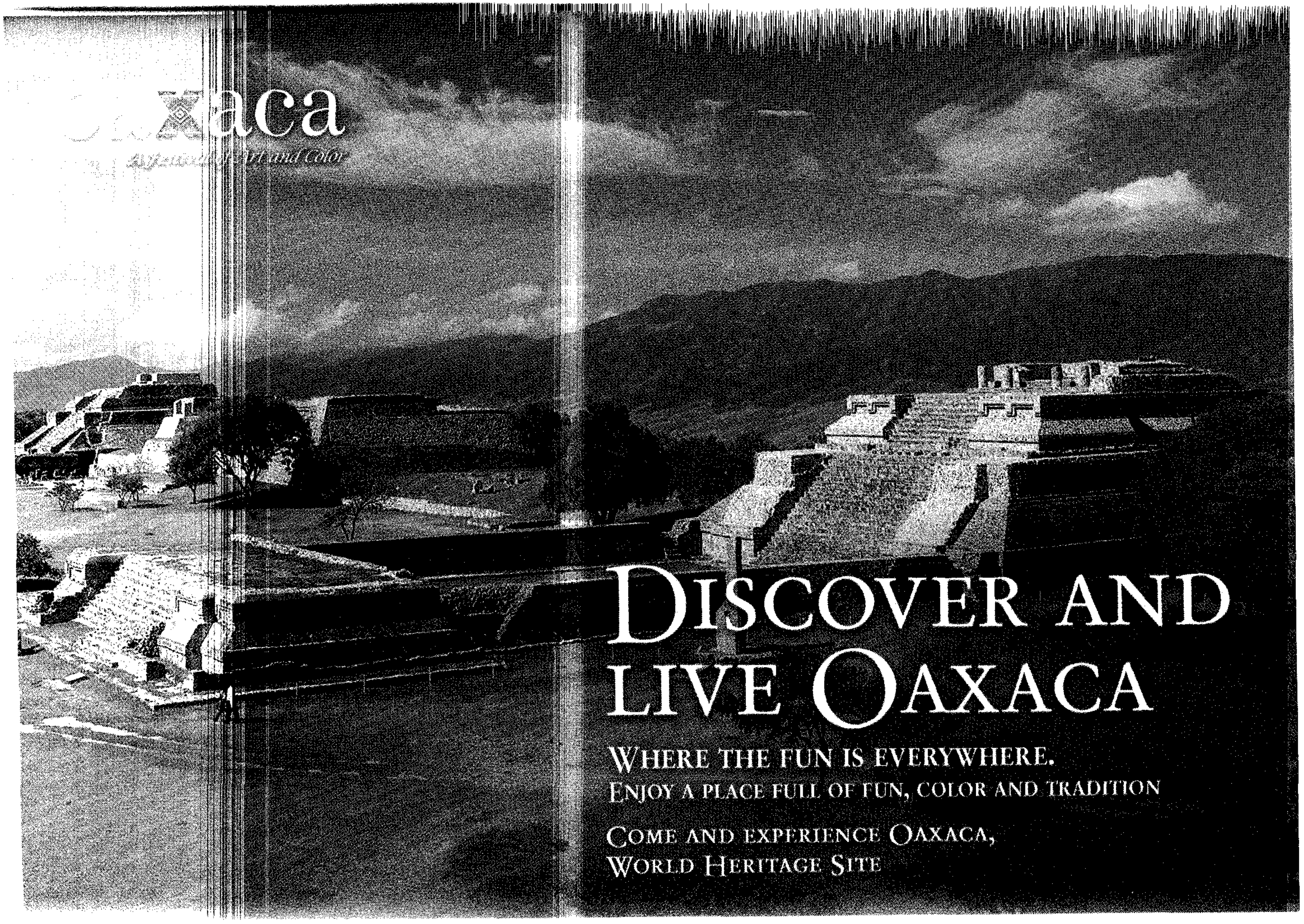
streamed away
wherever the great ships
were going. Far away
there were ways beyond knowing.

I walked back to the house.
My sister's new child was chained
to her breast. She drifted
inside a dark forest.

My father opined while the dog whined.
The television did its best.
While my father opined
the dog licked itself.

Well, you manage to find
what might make you happy.
I went on the Net. I wandered.
Asian bukkake.

—Bill Manhire



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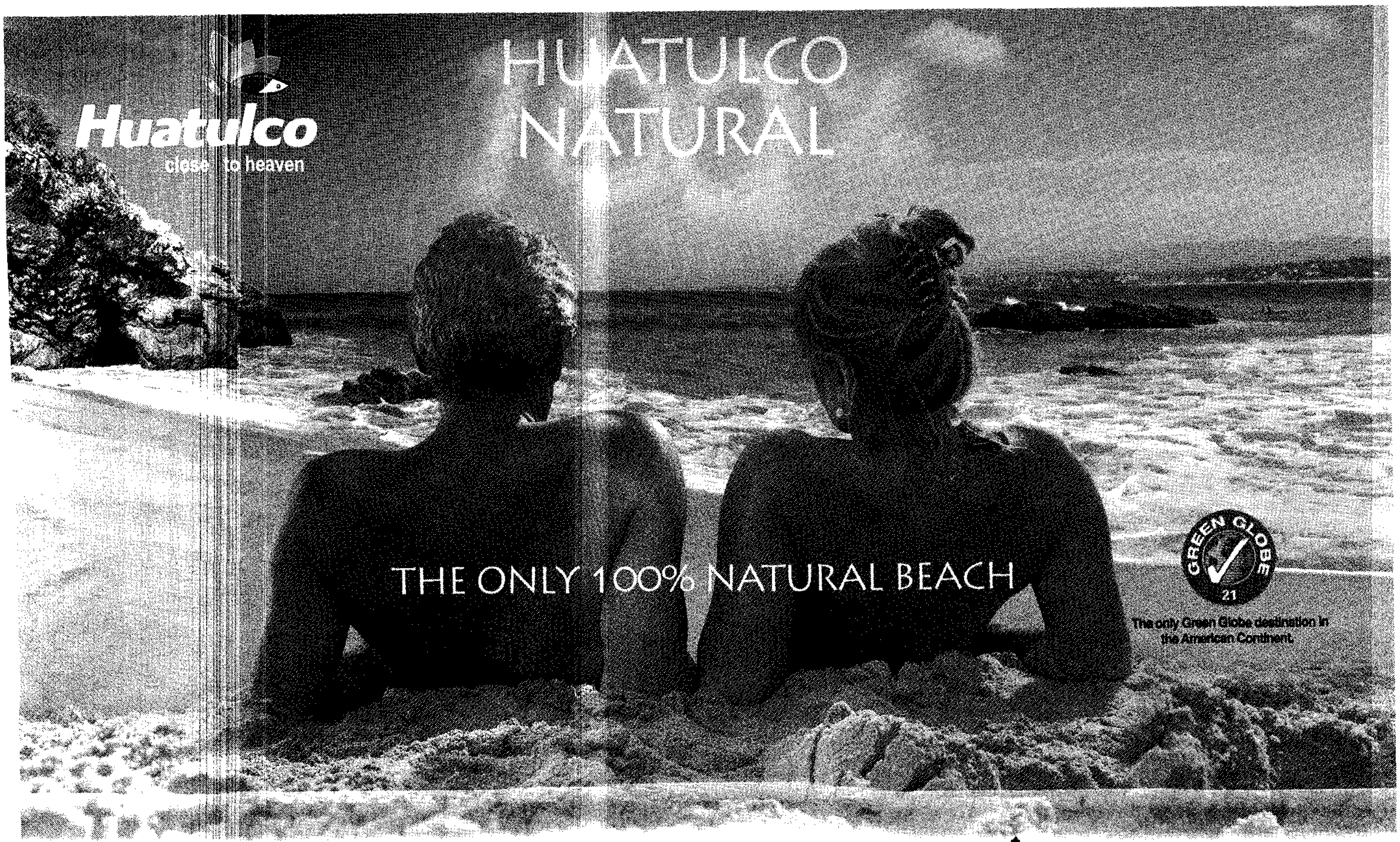

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A stroll along **Calle Alcalá**, just off the Zócalo, telescopes the heritage. The **Museo de las Culturas de Oaxaca** presents a time line of indigenous crafts. Fourteenth-century Mixtec gold and gemstone jewelry unearthed at Monte Albán is a showstopper in the collection. Next door, in the **Iglesia de Santo Domingo**, similar skills, including carving, painting, and metalwork, were employed in the sixteenth century to cover every inch of the church's magnificent interior.

Along both sides of the street, historic mansions have been converted into museums and galleries, including the **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca** and the **Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca**, a warren of print and photo exhibitions, workshops, and a library. The lines between art and traditional craft are often blurred, as in the naturally dyed hand-woven rugs sold at **La Mano Mágica** and the textiles at **Los Baules**. Gastronomes say the same is true of Chef Alejandro Ruiz's regional fare at **Casa Oaxaca**, nearby the Santo Domingo church.

The city's large daily food and craft markets are tasters' and shoppers' links to villages in the surrounding fertile valleys. Many are known for the particular skills of their artisans, such as **Teotitlán del Valle** for rug weaving. Six miles away, the must-see destination of **Monte Albán**, which shares a World Heritage Site designation with Oaxaca City, was the ancient Zapotec capital, later occupied by Mixtecs. From the pinnacle of its ruins, it still offers a breathtaking vista of mountains and valleys.

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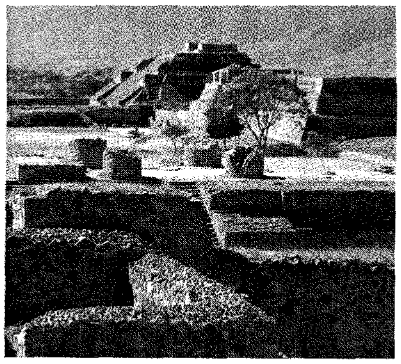

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hurt someone else on the team. And it's no good for morale."

Although Fraser and his team study many seabird species around Palmer Station—including giant petrels, skuas, and kelp gulls—his work is heavily focussed on Adélies. In the thirty-five years since he first arrived at Palmer Station, the population of Adélie penguins on the seven islands that compose his main study area—Torgersen, Humble, Litchfield, Cormorant, Christine, Dream, and Biscoe Point—has declined from between thirty thousand and forty thousand breeding pairs to fifty-six hundred breeding pairs, a drop of more than eighty per cent. Meanwhile, the Adélie's cousin from warmer climes, the gentoo penguin, is moving in, following the heat as it travels down the Antarctic Peninsula. In 1993, there were no gentoo penguins in Fraser's study area. Today, there are twenty-four hundred pairs. As Fraser is fond of saying, "There goes the neighborhood."

Adélies are an easy bird to love, with their upright carriage and industrious demeanor. Their bonding displays are particularly charming: males daintily give gifts of nest pebbles to females, and couples greet each other by issuing full-throated honks and weaving their heads back and forth, in a kind of Adélie air kiss. After they've paired off, Adélie couples sometimes stand side by side, looking like partners at the start of a square dance. Occasionally, one penguin bows to its mate.

What most appeals to Fraser, though, is the Adélies' feistiness. Once, on Humble Island, I watched as an Adélie marched up to a fifteen-hundred-pound elephant seal that had moved too close to the penguin's chicks and jabbed the seal in the mouth. The seal retreated, shimmying back several feet even as it opened its bubblegum-pink mouth in a display of aggression.

Fraser once came across a female Adélie that had been grievously injured in a leopard-seal attack. "The seal had grabbed her by the head and ripped her breastbone off right at the neck and you could look down into her stomach cavity," he said. "You could actually see her lungs working in there. But she spent a few days recouping, hunched over, and I'll be damned if in less than a week she wasn't back in the water, feeding her chicks. She and her mate even pulled a brood off."

From time to time, the team affixed satellite transmitters to the backs of Adélies to determine where they were foraging. Fraser would approach a colony and slowly insinuate his arm among the penguins, some of which would hurl themselves at him and jab his legs or hands. Snatching an Adélie, he passed the bird to me. I grabbed it by the flippers and delivered it to the team members attaching the tags. The penguin's might was electric, its football-shaped body—a solid mass of muscle—rocking my arms as it struggled to free itself.

One evening, we travelled to Torgersen Island to do Adélie diet sampling. This entailed grabbing several penguins, pumping water into their stomachs through plastic tubing until they regurgitated, and then collecting their stomach contents in a white plastic bucket.

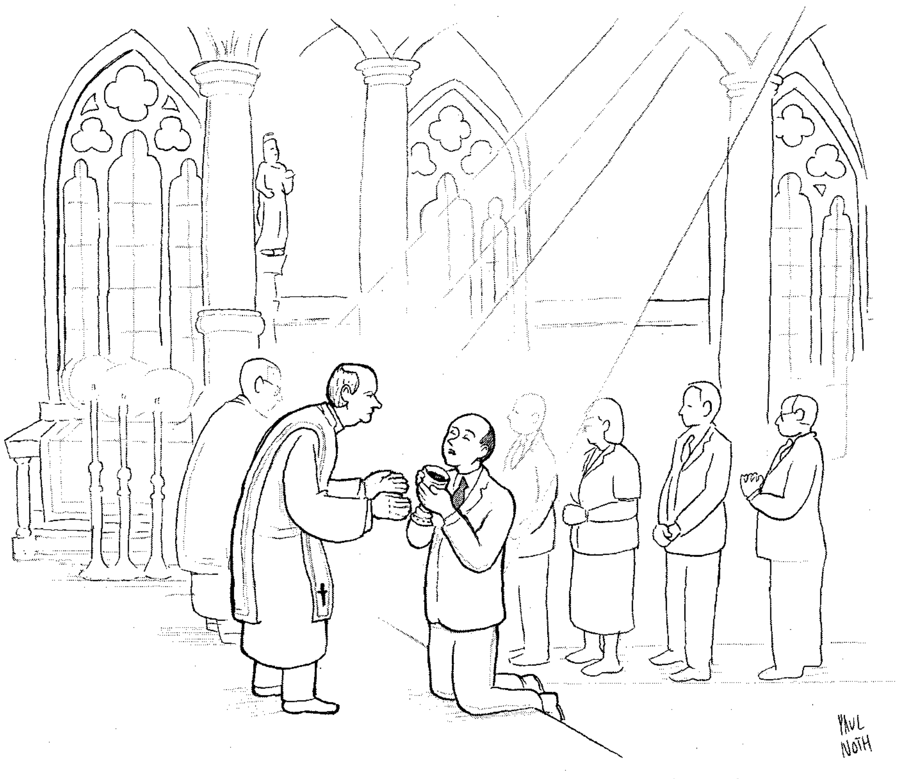
A team member, Brett Pickering, noticed drops of blood flowing into the bucket as one of the Adélies regurgitated krill. Pickering released the penguin, which stood for a few seconds, then lay down on the pebbles. It shook its head, spraying a combination of water, krill, and blood. The bird rose and tried to walk but couldn't. Blood-stained bubbles poured from its mouth. Fraser silently picked up the penguin, walked twenty-five feet away, knelt down, placed the Adélie between his legs, grabbed a rock, and ended its life with a blow to the head.

Several members of the team were on the verge of crying. We walked in silence back to the boat landing.

"Something has changed," Fraser said, as we neared the Zodiac. "I don't know what it is, but something has changed, and I want to find out what it is. We have done hundreds of these diet samples for years with no problems, and now in the last few years some birds have started dying.

"I know that it's very likely that the bird we're diet sampling is probably an old animal, because chick recruitment is so poor now. And it really bothers me that here's a bird that's survived thick and thin and gone through hell and it's an old bird and I come along and it dies because of me."

Like many earlier explorers, Fraser seems happiest in the Antarctic. ("Once you have been to the white unknown, you can never escape the call of the little voices," Frank Wild, Ernest



"I'm getting red fruits, earth tones, and oak. Amen."

Shackleton's second-in-command on the Endurance expedition, said.) I once asked Fraser if he could live in a city, and he replied, "When I have to spend four or five days at a conference in a big city, I wither away. I become lethargic. It drives me insane. I hate it when I can't see the horizon."

Fraser's many years in the field have been instrumental in helping him understand how a warming climate has decimated the region's Adélies.

"It always seemed intuitive to me that the only way to really understand something is to live in it, to spend a tremendous amount of time in the field, collecting the same data year after year," Fraser told me. "You develop a sense for what the rhythms should be, the flow of things. And that's what has allowed me to pick up things that don't make sense, the anomalies. The anomalous years really cue you in as to how this system is operating."

For eighteen years, beginning in 1987, Fraser spent from three to five months every year in Antarctica—and occasionally seven or eight—as his wife and two daughters stayed at home in the U.S. The marriage ended in divorce, and relations with one of his daughters have been strained. (Once, as he was preparing to depart for another season at Palmer, one of the daughters told him, "Mommy says you love penguins more than you love me.")

Though he worked for several years as an associate professor at Montana State University, Fraser's decision to run a field operation for nearly half the year made it virtually impossible for him to hold a traditional academic job. In 2002, he married one of his team members, Donna Patterson, who shares his commitment to the work at Palmer Station. The couple now run the Polar Oceans Research Group, a non-profit based in their home, a thirty-four-acre farm in southwestern Montana's Ruby Valley. The modest, century-old house owned by Fraser and Patterson sits at five thousand feet and has mountain views in all directions. Madison County, where they live, is half the size of New Jersey but has no stoplights and not quite eight thousand inhabitants.

"He's part of a generation of scientists we won't see again," Polly Penhale, a former program director of Antarctic biology and medicine at the National Science Foundation, told me. "How many people would give up their personal lives for four to five months a year for all those years?" Since having a son in 2004, Fraser has spent less time at Palmer and more time in Montana with his family, increasingly leaving the field work to his team.

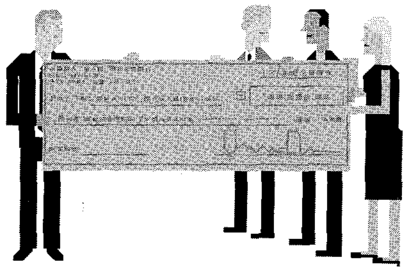
Over the past two decades, Fraser and his colleagues have gradually identified two main culprits in the decline of the region's Adélie penguins. One is the steady loss of sea ice along the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula. The second is a related increase in snowfall, which has primarily interfered with the ability of Adélies to successfully breed and incubate their eggs.

"There's this gigantic puzzle and you have all these pieces and it has taken twenty years to figure it out," Fraser said. "The most dangerous thing you can do is assume it is one factor that is causing these changes, when in fact many factors are playing a part."

The decline in sea-ice duration has been dramatic. Satellite imagery shows that sea ice now blankets waters off the peninsula three months less than it did in 1979. On average, sea ice forms fifty-four days later in the autumn and retreats thirty-one days sooner in the spring.

"The whole system revolves around the freezing point, so a slight change in the positive direction has major implications for the entire food web," Fraser said. "The freezing point is truly a threshold."

The importance of sea ice to Adélies first became clear to Fraser during a government-funded cruise in 1988. Fraser was aboard a Coast Guard icebreaker in the Weddell Sea, east of Palmer Station, on the other side of the Antarctic Peninsula. As the cruise unfolded in bitterly cold conditions, with temperatures sometimes plunging to minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit, Fraser noticed tens of thousands of Adélies on the pack ice and the absence of chinstrap penguins. A second research vessel, to the north, in the largely ice-free Scotia Sea, found almost exclusively chinstrap penguins, whose numbers were growing in the region.



The widely accepted explanation for the increase in chinstrap penguins was the decimation of baleen whales in the Southern Ocean by large-scale commercial whaling operations, which continued into the nineteen-eighties. Scientists believed that, with these voracious krill consumers largely removed from the sea, krill populations had rebounded, sparking a resurgence by creatures that ate krill, including chinstrap penguins.

If that hypothesis was true, Fraser wondered, then why were Adélies, which also ate krill, declining in number in some places? Not long after the cruise, he attended a conference in Hobart, Tasmania, during which several papers discussed growing evidence of global warming. "And that is when I sort of put these stories together," Fraser said. "It reeked of habitat change due to a warming climate."

He began to believe that changing penguin populations had less to do with krill abundance than with a warming winter habitat. Adélies were denizens of sea ice, while chinstraps preferred open water. The temperature record showed a steady decrease in the frequency of the cold years that led to extensive sea-ice formation along the Antarctic Peninsula, which occurs when the mean annual air temperature falls below 24 degrees Fahrenheit. At mid-century, roughly four out of five years saw temperatures below that mean. But by the nineteen-eighties the frequency of such winters had fallen to one or two out of every five years.

Some of Fraser's colleagues were skeptical of his thesis about the central role played by declining sea ice. Fraser spoke with scientists at NASA, which had begun using satellites to monitor sea ice along the peninsula. NASA researchers told him that there were no discernible trends in sea ice. Within a few years, however, satellite data clearly

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HELL
THE AIRPORT

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showed that sea ice was swiftly disappearing in the region. In 1991, Fraser and three colleagues wrote a paper on the subject, but the prestigious journals *Science* and *Nature* rejected it. A year later, he and his collaborators published the paper in *Polar Biology*, arguing that shrinking sea ice was leading to the growth of chinstrap populations and the decline of Adélies. That year, John Croxall, a prominent scientist with the British Antarctic Survey, published a paper questioning Fraser's thesis, saying that it was "certainly premature" to conclude that changing environmental factors, such as declining sea ice, were the reason behind shifting penguin populations. Croxall, who has retired, now says that, given the accumulated evidence of the last two decades, there is "no doubt" that declining sea ice has been a crucial factor affecting penguin populations.

As his research on the peninsula continued, Fraser became convinced that shrinking sea ice was depriving Adélies of a crucial platform that allowed them to reach rich feeding grounds. In winter, Adélies throughout Antarctica must have access to open water, which on the peninsula is typically at the heads of undersea canyons, where upwelling brings nutrients—and krill—to the surface. Those foraging areas must also be above the Antarctic Circle in midwinter, so that the penguins have sufficient light to see their prey. If a lack of ice prevents the Adélies from easily reaching these feeding grounds, their winter survival rates plummet.

"Without enough sea ice, these birds can't reach what must be very productive areas of the ocean," Fraser said. He had placed satellite tags on Adélies along the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula, which showed that they were foraging in three main locations, at the heads of the large undersea canyons.

One way to look at the Adélies' plight, Fraser said, is through the prism of an old ecological concept: "match-mismatch dynamics." More recently, some scientists and writers have taken to calling it "global weirding." On the most basic level, it means that a species has fallen out of sync with its environment.

In the field one afternoon, Fraser said, "What we're looking at here is an entire ecosystem that is changing, and it's not changing in hundreds of years, which is what we used to be taught. It's changed so quickly that it has encompassed the research lives of a few people who have spent a lifetime here."

The loss of sea ice has also taken a toll on ice-dependent krill—juvenile krill eat phytoplankton embedded in the underside of the ice—and on phytoplankton that bloom when sea ice melts in summer. Recent studies have shown drops in populations of both species along the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula. In addition, populations of ice-dependent Antarctic silverfish—which thirty years ago made up nearly half the diet of Adélie penguins around Palmer Station—have also fallen in the region, meaning that Adélies are overwhelmingly dependent on krill.

Hugh Ducklow, the director of the Ecosystems Center at Woods Hole and the head of the Palmer Long Term Ecological Research Network, said, "As sea ice begins to decline and then fails to form, as is now happening very rapidly, all these populations that depend on the timing and the existence and the extent of sea ice for their successful feeding and breeding will be high and dry."

Fraser has noticed from radio-transmitter data that Adélie penguins have been spending more time foraging at sea in recent years. Average foraging times appear to have increased from roughly eight to thirteen hours per trip, an indication that the Adélies are having a harder time finding the krill they need to feed their chicks—and themselves.

In the early nineties, Fraser began focussing on the impact of increasing snowfall on Adélie penguins. Working one November on Torgersen Island, Fraser walked to the top of the low, rocky ridge that bisects the island. He recalls, "I looked to my right, and that area was almost snow-free and there were thousands of Adélies there. Then I looked to my left—the south side—and it was under a metre of snow, with fewer than a thousand Adélies sitting on the snow, having a hell of a time trying to breed." Adélies have scant success nesting on snow or in snowmelt, as their eggs often become addled—and newly hatched chicks sometimes drown—in meltwater ponds.

Fraser realized that the abundant snow on the south side had to be related to the state of Adélie populations there, which were declining far more rapidly than on the north side of the island. As he stood on the ridge, it also became clear to him why the south side was snowier than the north: this relatively modest crest of crumbling, lichen-covered rocks was still high enough to create a wind barrier that prevented the prevailing northerly winds from blowing the snow off the south side.

"As counter-intuitive as it may sound, Adélie penguins are a snow-intolerant species," Fraser told me. "They evolved in a polar desert. And these birds' life histories are so finely tuned to the environment that tiny differences can affect their survival. If they don't have snow-free habitat by the end of November, their breeding success is catastrophic. You would think the Adélies would delay their breeding a bit because of the snow, but they can't. The birds are just hardwired and they don't adjust. They are hardwired into oblivion."

Snowfall had been increasing along the western Antarctic Peninsula, according to ice-core records and meteorological data from a nearby British base. More snow was consistent with a marine Antarctic environment that was experiencing an influx of warmer air and seeing sea ice shrink—thus exposing more open water, leading to more evaporation, which then formed as precipitation.

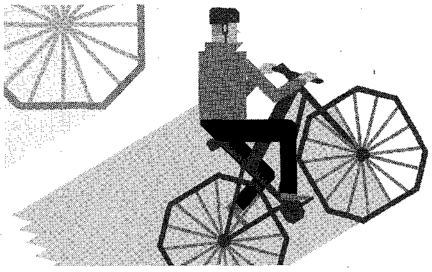
The main impact of increased snowfall on Adélies, according to Fraser, is that more eggs are being lost as colonies have to cope with melting snow. I witnessed that on Torgersen Island, where half a dozen eggs in Colony 19-A rested at the bottom of two murky ponds of snowmelt, about six inches deep. The water was a putrid brown color, and under the surface the eggs looked like large golf balls resting in a shallow water hazard. Adélies were standing belly-deep in the water, dunking their heads under the surface to try to move their eggs or rebuild their collapsed nests. Several penguins had managed to rebuild their nests high enough so that they just poked above the ponds, looking like castles in the middle of a lake. One or two even had succeeded in placing an egg atop the pile, after which they attempted to brood the eggs. That colony has since disappeared.

By monitoring the penguins from hatching to fledging, Fraser determined that pairs of Adélie penguins in his study area successfully raised, on average, 1.3 chicks to fledging. This rate is roughly twice as high as the success rate at some other colonies on the continent. Fraser soon realized that the reason Palmer's Adélies were so good at rearing chicks was that the breeders were almost all older, experienced adults, which have more success raising chicks than younger Adélies. Fraser said, "This high breeding success is actually an indicator of just how bad recruitment of new penguins into the population is, because new breeders always screw up."

Survival rates for fledged Adélie chicks that head to sea are low—by one estimate, between ten and fifteen per cent—so environmental factors that cut down on those odds can push a population of Adélies over the edge.

In February, I spent many days on Torgersen Island watching Adélie chicks plunge tentatively into the Southern Ocean. Looking half-panicked and half-playful, these fledging penguins dog-paddled in the shallows, splashed wildly with their flippers, and honked to their fellow-swimmers. Within a minute, the stronger chicks began heading out to sea. Most travelled in packs, but some headed out alone. I saw a young Adélie struggle through three-foot waves and then, as it cleared the surf, scramble onto a passing ice floe in a desperate attempt to find some semblance of terra firma. The chick then floated away, its ice platform rocking in the swells.

Biscoe Point, on the southeastern corner of Anvers Island, sits in the shadow of Mt. William, a fifty-two-hundred-foot peak whose ridges are cloaked in ice and whose gray face is etched with snow-filled draws. A dozen miles away, on the peninsula, looms a line of tombstone-shaped mountains that plunge into the Southern Ocean. These days, however, Biscoe Point is in need of rechristening. As recently as twenty years ago, the Marr Ice Piedmont covered part of Biscoe. But the retreat of the glacier has revealed that what once looked like a peninsula is actually an island, now separated from the glacier by more than fifty feet of open water. The warmer weather has brought other changes to Biscoe: As Adélie-penguin populations have declined, gentoo penguins—with their fondness for higher temperatures—have arrived in force.



Fraser and I went to Biscoe in mid-January. He had not been there in two years, and as we puttered to our landing site he noted that gentoo-penguin colonies had spread across a series of terraces, all the way to the highest ridge. "Is that a gentoo colony way the hell up there on the ridge?" he asked. "This is just amazing." There were seven hundred and sixty-one nesting pairs of Adélies—down from twenty-eight hundred pairs in 1984—and they were relegated to a few ridges close to the sea. For the first time, more gentoos—nine hundred and two pairs—were nesting on Biscoe than Adélies. As we ranged across the terraces where the gentoos had built their round, high-sided nests, they filled the air with donkey-like braying.

We walked to the end of the point, next to the terminus of the Marr glacier. For two hundred yards, we traversed gradually sloping terrain of smoke-colored stone and shattered rocks, some frost-fractured into thin slices. In the seventies, the area we walked across was buried under a hundred feet of ice. Now the ice patch, the size of a football field just two years before, had been reduced by half, and seemed to be only a few dozen feet thick. On the surface of the ice, fist-size rocks had been heated by the sun, boring holes in the remnant of the glacier. We dipped our hands into these little wells, drinking the sweet water. I could hear, beneath the plate of ice, the trickling of meltwater flowing to the sea. Patches of Antarctica's two vascular plants—a short, tufty, pale-green hair grass, *Deschampsia antarctica*, and a mossy-looking pearlwort, *Colobanthus* *quitensis*—were colonizing new territory amid the glacial till.

We sat on rocks and gazed at the glacier's face, which was several stories high. Its luminous front was honeycombed, and much of it slumped forward, looking like melted wax. The noise coming from the glacier was constant—sharp cracks, deep rumbles like the sound of furniture being moved across a floor, and from time to time the showering of ice inside a hidden crevasse. The snapping sounds intensified and then, just in front of us, a twenty-five-foot chunk of the glacier calved into the narrow channel separating the Marr and Biscoe. The cascading pieces of the glacier sent waves lapping against nearby rocks. Thousands of ice shards from this and previous calvings hissed as they were buffeted by the waves. The newly exposed face of the glacier was a heavenly shade of blue, attained over thousands of years as the ice was compressed and air pockets were eliminated.

Eighty-seven per cent of the glaciers along the Antarctic Peninsula are in retreat, according to a study by the British Antarctic Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey. Along the peninsula, eight ice shelves have fully or partially disintegrated in the past three decades. The largest collapse was the Larsen B Ice Shelf—once the size of Connecticut—which in March, 2002, shattered into millions of pieces after several summers of unusually high air temperatures in the customarily frigid Weddell Sea. Many glaciers in west Antarctica are now sliding more rapidly to the sea, most notably the Pine Island Glacier, a river of ice—a hundred and ninety miles long and thirty miles wide—moving toward the Amundsen Sea at the rate of a foot an hour. If that glacier and the neighboring Thwaites Glacier unload their mass into the Southern Ocean, sea levels could rise as much as five feet.

"If someone had taken you here ten or twenty years ago and said, 'This will all disappear in ten years,' you would have said, 'You're fucking crazy,'" Fraser said. "The ice cap on Biscoe has been here for thousands of years, and now it's almost gone. What you're seeing here is what you would have seen if you had been standing in Wisconsin fifteen thousand years ago as the glaciers retreated. This is what these landscapes must have looked like as the ice melted. It's the sheer power of the earth—ice and rock. Lesson No. 1 for me has been the realization that ecology and ecosystems can change like that," he said, snapping his fingers. "In geological time, it's a nanosecond."

In all likelihood, the fate that has befallen Adélie penguins around Palmer Station awaits ice-dependent penguins breeding farther south in Antarctica. Two and a half million pairs of Adélie penguins still breed throughout the continent, and some Adélie populations in colder Antarctic regions are actually growing. Such is the case with a rookery of Adélies that Fraser's team monitors on Avian Island, in Marguerite Bay, two hundred and fifty miles south of Palmer Station. Fifty years ago, much of the ocean around Avian Island was covered year-round in ice, making it difficult for large numbers of Adélies to nest there and gain access to the open water needed for foraging. But the warming of the bay region has melted sea ice and provided an optimal mixture of ice and open water. As a result, Fraser estimates that the Adélie-penguin population on Avian Island has doubled in the past thirty-five years, to between fifty thousand and seventy-five thousand pairs. But he believes that the Avian Island population is probably nearing its peak, and that, as sea ice continues to disappear, the rookery will decline.

David Ainley, a penguin expert, who studies Adélie populations on the Ross Sea, recently led a study funded by the National Science Foundation and the conservation group W.W.F. Ainley and his colleagues predict a dire impact on polar penguins if global temperatures rise 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, which now seems inevitable. The researchers conclude that Adélie- and emperor-penguin colonies north of 70° S—comprising half of Antarctica's emperor-penguin colonies and three-quarters of the continent's Adélie colonies—"are in jeopardy of marked decline or disappearance."

Within several decades, Fraser believes, Adélie penguins will disappear from the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula. As he put it, "They're on a decline that has no recovery."

In late January, two members of the birding team and I returned to Litchfield Island to see if any Adélie chicks remained. Walking across the many abandoned colonies, I strained to catch a glimpse of chicks, but as we neared the other side of the island it was clear that the young Adélies were gone. Lacking the protection of a larger colony, they had presumably been eaten by brown skuas.

Brett Pickering, the field-team member, said, "Litchfield is officially over."

"It's the total lack of any life whatsoever on these quite large rookeries that just keeps going through my mind," Fraser said after I returned from Litchfield.

"I have real affection for Adélies, but everything seems to be working against them," Fraser had told me earlier. "Here you have this unbelievably tough little animal, able to deal with anything, succumbing to the large-scale effects of our activities. And that's the one thing they can't deal with, and they're dying because of it. And that's the sad side of that story for the Adélies. It's such a long-distance effect. The industrial nations to the north are having an impact that Adélies are being subjected to down here. That's what sort of pisses me off about the whole picture, that these incredible animals have to take it in the neck because a bunch of humans can't get together to decide what to do about the planet."

Several days later, Fraser returned to Litchfield, wanting to see for himself the end of the island's Adélie rookery. A lone adult stood staidly in Colony 8, flippers at its sides, scarcely noticing us. The penguin seemed to be sleeping, the white rings around its eyes closing to a slit and gently pulsating. The late-summer sun turned the Bismarck Strait a shade of deep indigo. Except for the gentle slosh of the surf and the occasional cry of a brown skua, the island was silent. ♦

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Slide show: Fen Montaigne on penguins.

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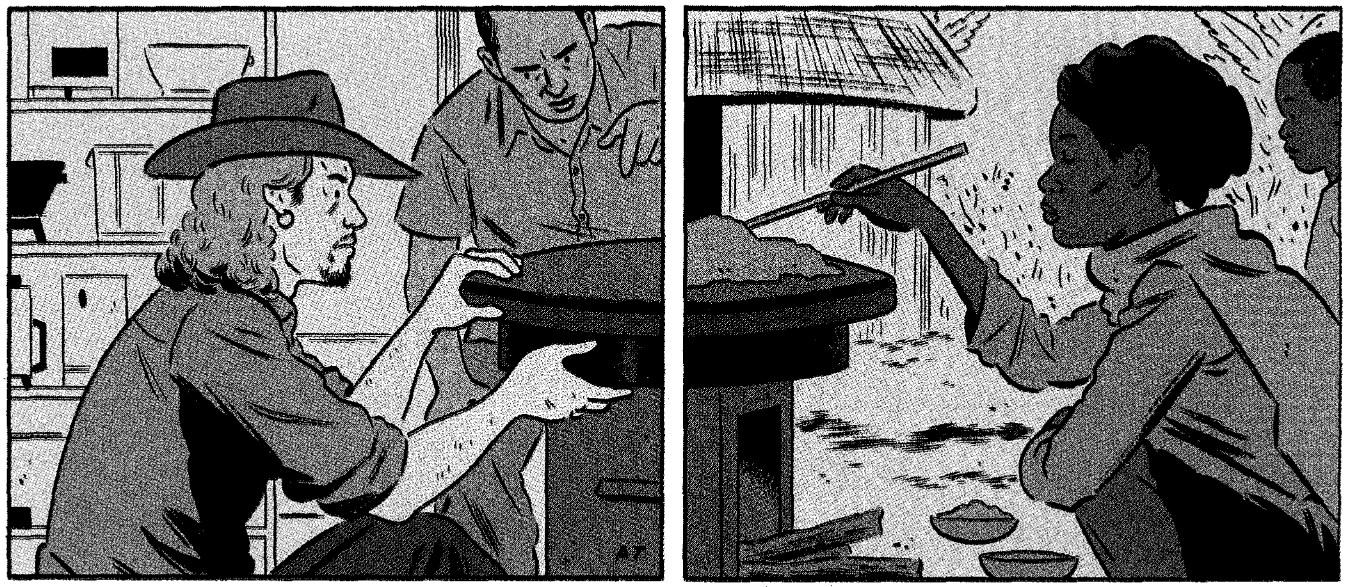
ANNALS OF INVENTION

HEARTH SURGERY

The quest for a stove that can save the world.

BY BURKHARD BILGER

Two men walked into a bar called the Axe and Fiddle. It was a Thursday night in early August, in the town of Cottage Grove, Oregon, and the house was full. The men ordered drinks and a vegetarian Reuben and made their way to the only seats left, near a small stage at the back. The taller of the two, Dale Andreatta, had clear blue eyes and a long, columnar head crowned with gray hair. He was wearing a pleated kilt, festooned with pockets and loops for power tools, and spoke in a loud, unmodulated voice, like a clever robot. His friend, Peter Scott, was thinner and more dishevelled, with a vaguely Biblical look. He had long brown hair and sandalled feet, sun-baked skin and piercing eyes.



Devising the perfect stove could prevent one and a half million deaths a year in developing countries, and reduce carbon emissions.

ADRIAN TOMINE

None of the locals paid them any mind. Cottage Grove, like much of Oregon, is home to hippies and hillbillies in equal measure. At the Axe and Fiddle, lumbermen from the local Weyerhaeuser and Starfire mills sat side by side with former Hoedads—free-living tree planters who'd reforested large tracts of the Bitterroot and Cascade Mountains. The bar was flanked by a bookstore and, a few doors down Main Street, a store that specializes in machine guns. "I can't imagine that his market's that big," the bookstore's owner told me. "I mean, how many machine guns does a guy need?"

The featured act at the bar that night was a burlesque troupe from New York called Nice Jewish Girls Gone Bad. Just how they'd landed in the Oregon woods wasn't clear, but they stuck stubbornly to their set list. They sang a song about gefilte fish ("Fear Factor for Jews") and danced suggestively to Yiddish hip-hop. They promised to put the whore back in hora, and when that met with only polite applause—"Look it up on Wikipedia"—they asked for a show of hands from local Jews. There were five. Finally, near the end of the show, one of the performers—a spindly comedian with thick black glasses and a T-shirt that said "Freak"—peered out from under the spotlight and fixed her eyes, a little desperately, on Peter Scott. "Do you have a job?" she said, almost to herself.

Scott said no, then yes.

"That sounds fishy. What is it you do?"

Scott fidgeted for a second, then mumbled, "I make stoves for Africa."

"You what?"

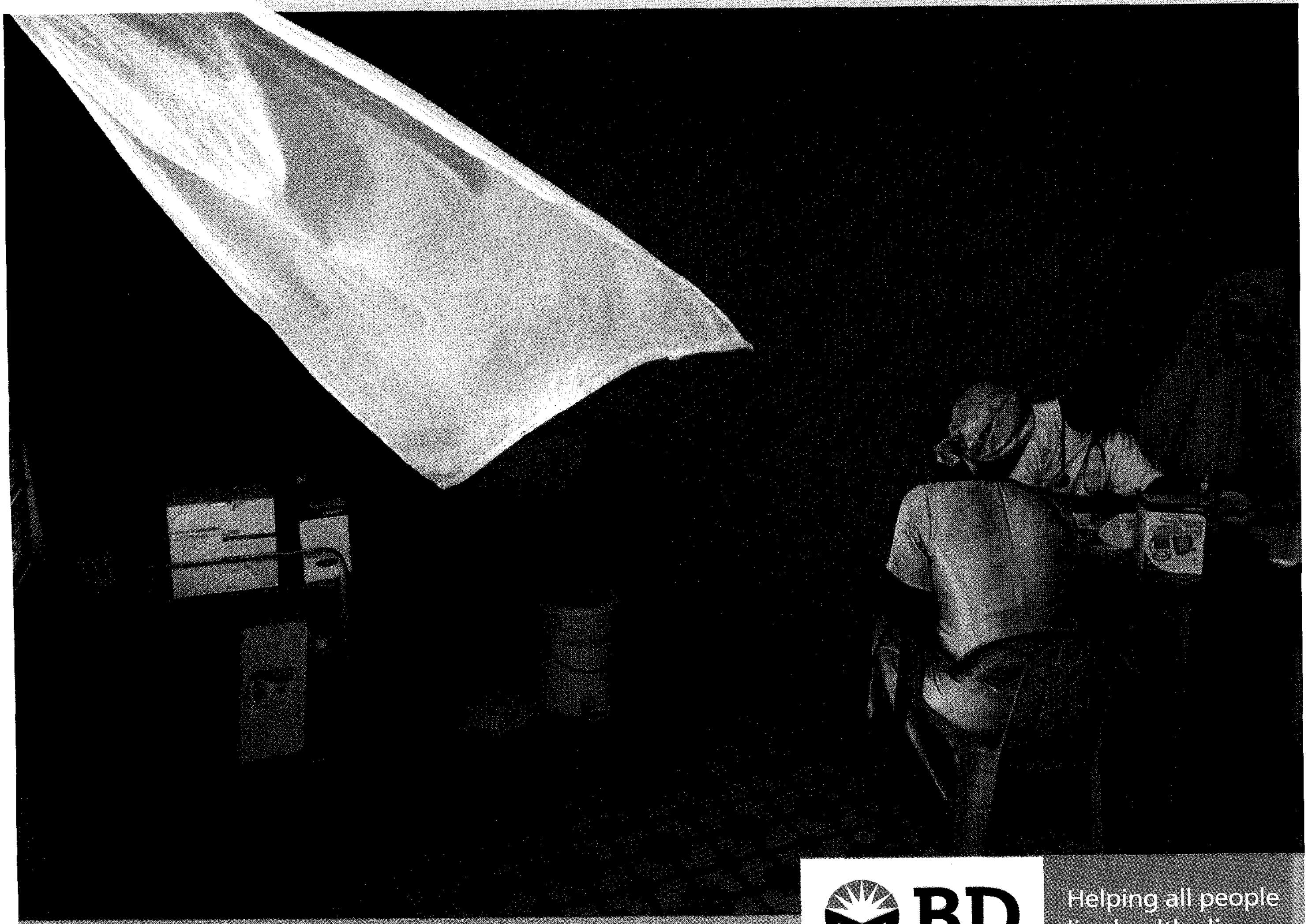
"I make stoves for Africa."

Scott was being modest. In the small but fanatical world of stovemakers he is something of a celebrity. ("Peter is our rock star," another stovemaker told me.) For the past seven years, under the auspices of the German aid agency GTZ, Scott has designed or built some four hundred thousand stoves in thirteen African countries. He has made them out of mud, brick, sheet metal, clay, ceramic, and discarded oil drums. He has made them in villages without electricity or liquid fuel, where meals are still cooked over open fires, where burns are among the most common injuries and smoke is the sixth leading cause of death. In the places where Scott works, a good stove can save your life.

He and Andreatta were in Cottage Grove for Stove Camp. A mile or two from the Axe and Fiddle, a few dozen engineers, anthropologists, inventors, foreign-aid workers, and rogue academics had set up tents in a meadow along a willowy bend in a fork of the Willamette River. They spent their days designing and testing wood-burning stoves, their nights cooking under the stars and debating thermodynamics. Stove Camp was a weeklong event hosted by the Aprovecho Research Center—the engi-

Over two-thirds of all people infected with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa, yet the continent relies on just 3% of the world's healthcare workforce,[1] a disparity that creates tremendous stress for caregivers.

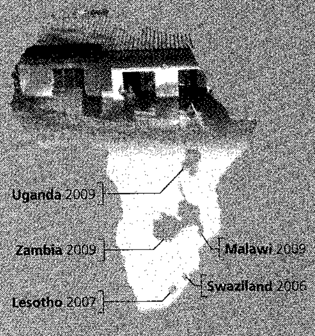
The International Council of Nurses (ICN), a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations, is addressing this crisis through a program of Wellness Centers for Healthcare Workers and their Families. To learn more, please visit www.icn.ch.



BD

Helping all people live healthy lives

Helping those who help others



ICN Wellness Centers

It is estimated that African health systems may lose 20% of their workers to HIV/AIDS in the coming years due to illness and unacceptable working conditions.[2]

BD and ICN are collaborating to establish wellness centers that provide comprehensive health services for healthcare workers and their families in countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS and the shortage of healthcare workers.

The goal is to sustain a healthy, motivated and productive workforce, which in turn will be able to better care for patients. The program includes testing, counseling, stress management, training and treatment.

Recently, BD, ICN and PEPFAR (The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) announced a three-year public-private partnership valued at $1.25 million. The objective is to establish a new Wellness Center in Kampala, Uganda, using one constructed in Swaziland as a model.

Named one of *World's Most Admired Companies*[3] as well as one of the *World's Most Ethical Companies*,[4] BD provides advanced medical technology to serve the global community's greatest needs.

BD – Helping all people live healthy lives.

[1] World Health Organization, 2006. [2] Joint Learning Initiative: *Human Resources for Health*, 2006. [3] *FORTUNE*, March 2009. [4] Ethisphere® Magazine, April 2009

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

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neering offshoot of a local institute, education center, and environmental collective. Now in its tenth year, the camp had become a kind of hippie Manhattan Project. It brought together the best minds in the field to solve a single, intractable problem: How do you build cheap, durable, clean-burning stoves for three billion people?

A map of the world's poor is easy to make, Jacob Moss, a Stove Camper who works for the Environmental Protection Agency and started its Partnership for Clean Indoor Air, told me. Just follow the smoke. About half the world's population cooks with gas, kerosene, or electricity, while the other half burns wood, coal, dung, or other solid fuels. To the first group, a roaring hearth has become a luxury—a thing for camping trips and Christmas parties. To the second group, it's a necessity. To the first group, a kitchen is an arsenal of specialized appliances. To the second, it's just a place to build a fire.

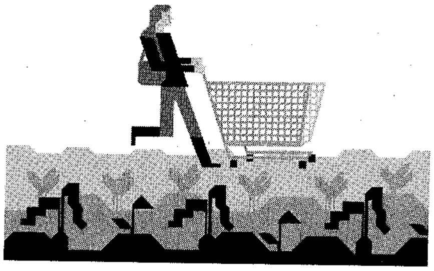
Clean air, according to the E.P.A., contains less than fifteen micrograms of fine particles per cubic metre. Five times that amount will set off a smoke alarm. Three hundred times as much—roughly what an open fire produces—will slowly kill you. Wood smoke, as sweet as it smells, is a caustic swirl of chemical agents, including benzene, butadiene, styrene, formaldehyde, dioxin, and methylene chloride. Every leaf or husk adds its own compounds to the fire, producing a fume so corrosive that it can consume a piece of untreated steel in less than a year. The effect on the body is similar. Indoor smoke kills a million and a half people annually, according to the World Health Organization. It causes or compounds a long list of debilities—pneumonia, bronchitis, emphysema, cataracts, cancers, heart disease, high blood pressure, and low birth weight—and has been implicated in a number of others, including tuberculosis, low I.Q., and cleft palate, among other deformities.

A well-made stove can easily clear the air, by piping the smoke out through a chimney or burning the fuel more efficiently. Yet most appliance manufacturers see no profit in making products for people who can't pay for them. And most aid agencies have found easier ways to help the poor—by administering vaccines, for instance. Stovemakers are a chronically underfunded bunch, used to toiling in the dusty margins of international development. Aside from a few national programs in Asia and the Americas, their projects have tended to be small and scattershot, funded a few thousand stoves at a time by volunteers and N.G.O.s. "We've been watering this rock for a long time," Dean Still, the head of Aprovecho, told me.

Lately, though, the rules have changed. As global temperatures have risen, the smoke from Third World kitchens has been upgraded from a local to a universal threat. The average cooking fire produces about as much carbon dioxide as a car, and a great deal more soot, or black carbon—a substance seven hundred times as warming. Black carbon absorbs sunlight. A single gram warms the atmosphere as much as a fifteen-hundred-watt space heater running for a week. Given that cooking fires each release one or two thousand grams of soot in a year, and that three billion people rely on them, cleaning up those emissions may be the fastest, cheapest way to cool the planet.

In June, the sweeping Waxman-Markey climate bill was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. Hidden among its fourteen hundred pages was a short section calling on the E.P.A. to identify ways to provide stoves to twenty million households in five years. The bill made no mention of how or where the stoves might be built, or who might pay for them. But there was talk of carbon-credit subsidies, international cofinancing, and major-appliance manufacturers entering the fray.

The engineers of Stove Camp, in other words, found themselves suddenly blinking in the spotlight—like a band of raccoons caught digging through a scrap heap. "Kill a million and a half people and nobody gives a damn," one



government official told me. "But become part of this big climate thing and everyone comes knocking at your door."

The entrance to Stove Camp was marked by a piece of weathered plywood, hung on a rusty railroad trestle, with the words "Fred's Island" spray-painted on it. The place wasn't technically an island—it was bordered by the river on two sides and the railroad on the third—but it did belong to a retired carpenter named Fred Colgan. When I arrived on a Sunday evening, he and Aprovecho's Dean Still showed me an old trailer where I could sleep, a few yards from the tracks. "Wait till that timber train comes through at four in the morning," Colgan said. He gripped an imaginary bedstead and rattled his head up and down. "If you see giant rats in the middle of the night, you haven't had too much to drink. We're infested with nutria."

Still laughed. "A nutria is a rodent," he said. "Entirely harmless."

"It's a rat the size of a cocker spaniel."

Before Colgan and his wife, Lise, bought the island, four years ago, it had belonged to a slaughterhouse and meatpacking operation, which left its buildings scattered across the grounds. Colgan offered the use of them to Still in 2006, after the stove program outgrew its original facilities a few miles up the road. The research center now has seven employees and a rotating cast of volunteers, who spend their time testing and developing stoves for projects worldwide. Their offices occupy a ramshackle complex along the river, with a wooden corral to one side and a labyrinth of labs, workshops, and storage rooms in back. Still holds his stove meetings in the meat locker, where the carcasses used to hang.

"Here's the deal," he told us one morning. "The world is absolutely littered with failed stoves. At the U.N., they laugh at us when we say that we have another project. So if we keep on blowing it we're in trouble." He peered at the bleary-eyed campers, about thirty strong, gathered around mismatched Formica tables. Jacob Moss, the E.P.A. official, sat next to a pulmonologist from the National Institutes of Health; Peter Scott had recently returned from Uganda, and others had worked on projects in Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Malawi, Peru, India, and China. "It ain't easy," Still told them. "But it ain't impossible. We're going to be offered opportunities. But if there's going to be money for twenty million stoves we have to be ready. And we have to *not* screw this up."

Still, who is fifty-seven, is one of the presiding spirits of the stove community. He has a large ruddy face and a mop of white hair, a wide walrus mustache, and dark eyebrows that curve high above his eyes, giving him a look of perpetual, delighted surprise. Decades of living and working in hardscrabble villages have instilled an improbable ebullience in him, and a correlative roundness of form. I once compared him to Buddha when I was talking to Scott, who quickly corrected me. "Dean's a mystic Episcopalian," he said. "The only thing Buddhist about him is his girth." It's true that Still keeps plastic statues of St. Francis, the Virgin Mary, and the Archangel Michael glued to the dashboard of his truck. (Michael's flaming sword, he says, reminds him that "sometimes to make something good happen you have to kick people in the ass.") But when I was with him they were joined by well-foxed copies of William James and a book of Mad Libs. When it comes to stoves, he said, any spiritual guidance will do.

Earlier that summer, Still had flown to London to accept an Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy, presented by Prince Charles. To prepare for the ceremony and press interviews, he'd had to buy his first suit since his wedding twelve years ago, and the Ashden foundation had given him a week's worth of elocution lessons. ("The English, geez, they're so unconsciously imperialist.") Still has a clear but indecorous way of talking, with an old hippie's loitering rhythms and self-questioning asides. Although he has trained a generation of stove designers and built one of the world's premier stove-testing labs, his science is mostly self-taught and he's uncomfortable playing the expert. "I'm just the mouth," he told us, waving his hands at the engineers in the room. "These guys are the brains." They just needed a little prodding now and then.

He turned to the whiteboard behind him and scrawled out some bullet points

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with a pink marker. "This is now the definition of a good stove, according to Waxman-Markey," he said: "1. Reduces fuel use by more than fifty per cent. 2. Reduces black carbon by more than sixty per cent. 3. Reduces childhood pneumonia by more than thirty per cent. 4. Affordable ($10 retail or less). 5. Cooks love it. 6. Gets funded." The last three weren't in the bill, Still admitted, but no stove could succeed without them. And none had ever met all six criteria at once.

"So this is what we have to do this week, my dears," he said. "Save the damn world." He grinned. "I mean, you didn't want an easy problem, did you?"

Building a stove is simple. Building a good stove is hard. Building a good, cheap stove can drive an engineer crazy. The devices at Aprovecho looked straightforward enough. Most were about the size and shape of a stockpot, with a cylindrical combustion chamber and a cooking grate on top. You stuck some twigs in the chamber, set them on fire, and put your pot on the grate—nothing to it. Yet one stove used a pound of wood to boil a gallon of water, and another used two. Fire is a fickle, nonlinear thing, and seems to be affected by every millimetre of a stove's design—the size of the opening, the shape and material of the chamber, the thickness of the grate—each variable amplifying the next and being amplified in turn, in a complex series of feedback loops. "You've heard of the butterfly effect?" one engineer told me. "Well, these stoves are full of butterflies."

Like science and religion, stove design is riven into sects and disciplines. Some engineers use only low-cost materials like mud or brick; others dabble in thermoelectric generators and built-in fans—cleaner and more efficient, but also more expensive. Most stoves are built for combustion: they consume the wood and reduce it to ash. But a few are designed for gasification instead. These stoves heat the wood until it releases its volatile compounds, which are ignited in the air. (All that's left of the wood afterward is its carbon skeleton, which can be burned separately as charcoal or used as a fertilizer.) Gasifiers can be remarkably clean-burning, but they're also finicky. Because the fire burns at the top of the stove, rather than rising up from a bed of coals at the bottom, its flames are easily stifled when new fuel is added, turning the stove into a smoke bomb.

In the vestibule of the Aprovecho building, Still had set up a small "Museum of Stoves" on facing wall racks. Its contents came from more than a dozen countries, in an odd menagerie of shapes and sizes: an elegant clay chulha from India, a squat steel Jiko from Kenya, a painted coal burner from China, like an Easy-Bake oven. Most were better than an open fire, yet all had failed the test in some way—too flimsy or inefficient or expensive or unstable or unclean or hard to use. "We still haven't cracked the nut," Peter Scott said.

Scott had come to Stove Camp to build a better injera stove. Injera is the spongy pancake that Ethiopians eat with almost every meal. The batter is usually made of an ancient grain called teff, and fermented until it's bubbly and tart. It's poured onto a ceramic griddle, or *mitad*, then set over an open fire or a concrete hearth. In Ethiopia, injera is often cooked by women's coöperatives, in kitchens that may have forty or fifty smoky, inefficient stoves running simultaneously—one reason that the country has lost more than ninety per cent of its forests since the early sixties. "In the north, people will travel hundreds of kilometres to get wood, then double back to bring it to market," Scott told me. A good stove, he figured, could cut that fuel use in half.

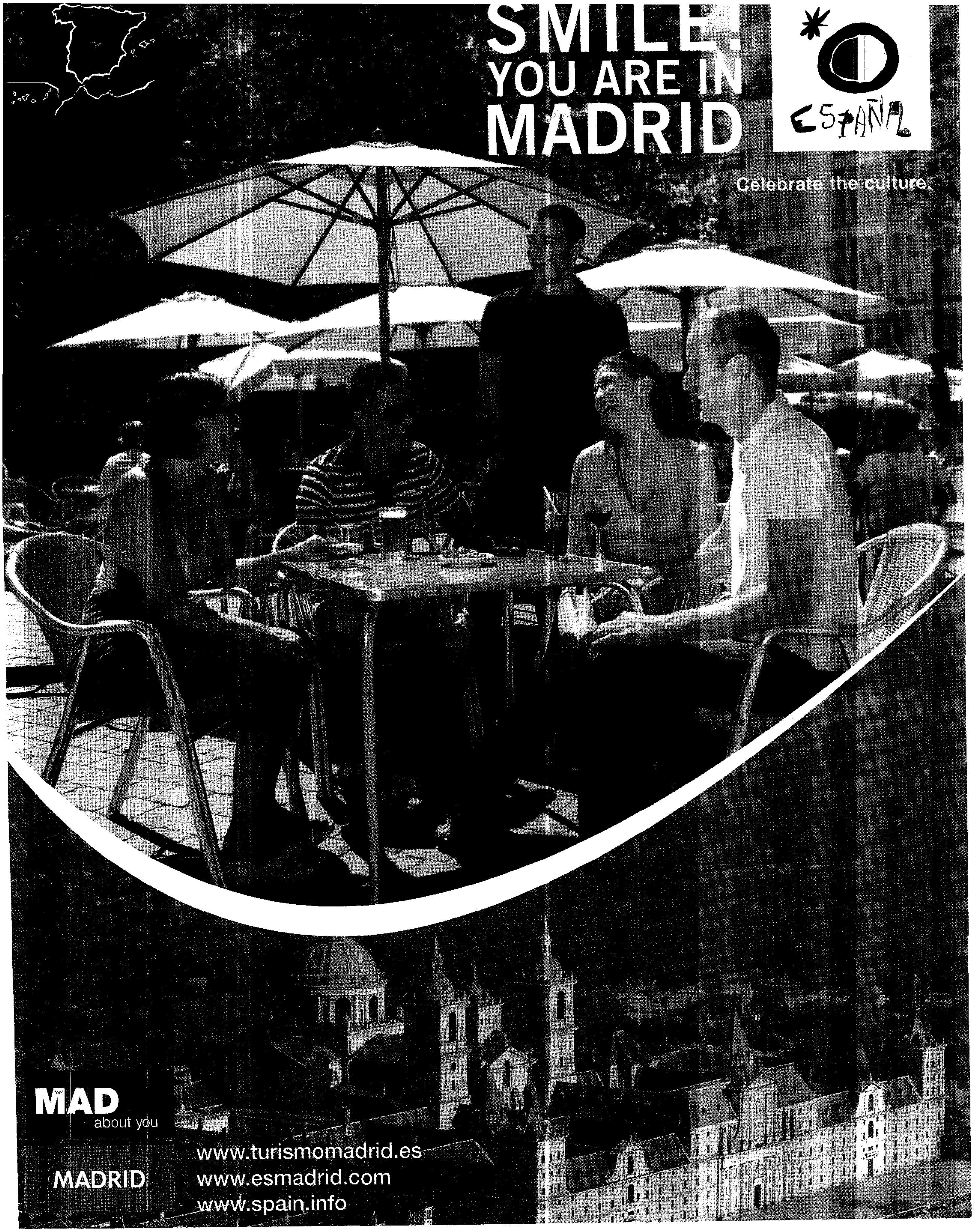
For the past several months, Scott and his kilt-wearing friend Dale Andreatta—a mechanical engineer from Columbus, Ohio, who often did stove projects pro bono—had been collaborating on a prototype. It had an efficient ceramic combustion chamber, shaped like a miniature fireplace, with a round griddle perched above it like a tabletop. Scott had tried using a traditional *mitad*, since local cooks would much prefer it, but the ceramic wouldn't heat evenly, so he'd switched to steel instead. Steel conducts heat much more efficiently than ceramic, and it's often used for the plancha griddles in tortilla stoves. Injera, though, is an unforgiving dish. Its batter is thin and watery, so it can't be moved around like a tortilla, and any hot spots in the griddle will burn it. "The Ethiopians are unbelievably particular," Scott said. "If the injera doesn't have the exact size of bubble in the batter, they'll say it's garbage."

Luckily, Scott was used to improvising under much rougher conditions. His years in the African bush had left him, at forty, as sober and sinewy as Still was gregarious and stout. Scott had lived in mud huts in Swaziland, battled intestinal infections in Zambia, and been robbed by bandits in Uganda. When he first went to Africa for a stove project, in 2002, he was taken hostage on his third day, in an Internet café in Pretoria. "They tied us up, laid us on the ground, a gun at the back of the head," he told me. "I had a strong premonition that I was going to die. But I didn't die. So after that I didn't worry too much about my own safety." He went on to build stoves for refugees in the Congo, tobacco-curing barns in Malawi and Tanzania, and institutional stoves throughout eastern and southern Africa. In 2006, he became the first Aprovecho member to receive an Ashden Award. (As a Canadian, he told me, he was excused from the elocution lessons.)

Over the next few days, I'd periodically find Scott and Andreatta skulking around the Aprovecho workshops and laboratories, looking for tools or discussing metallurgy. Their preliminary tests had not been encouraging: the griddle was two hundred degrees hotter at the center than at the edge. When I asked Andreatta how it was going, he lifted an eyebrow. "The optimist thinks the glass is half full," he said. "The pessimist thinks the glass is half empty. The engineer knows the real truth: that the glass is twice as large as it should be for optimum utilization of resources."

When Aprovecho was founded, in the late nineteen-seventies, building stoves was a good deal less complicated. "Appropriate technology" was the byword then. Grounded in the teachings of Gandhi and the economist E. F. Schumacher, the philosophy held that poor countries are best served by low-cost, low-tech, local development. Better to teach villagers to make a stove than to give them stoves that they can't afford to repair or replace.

Aprovecho took the idea a step further. "We wanted to work as an inverse Peace Corps," Ianto Evans, one of the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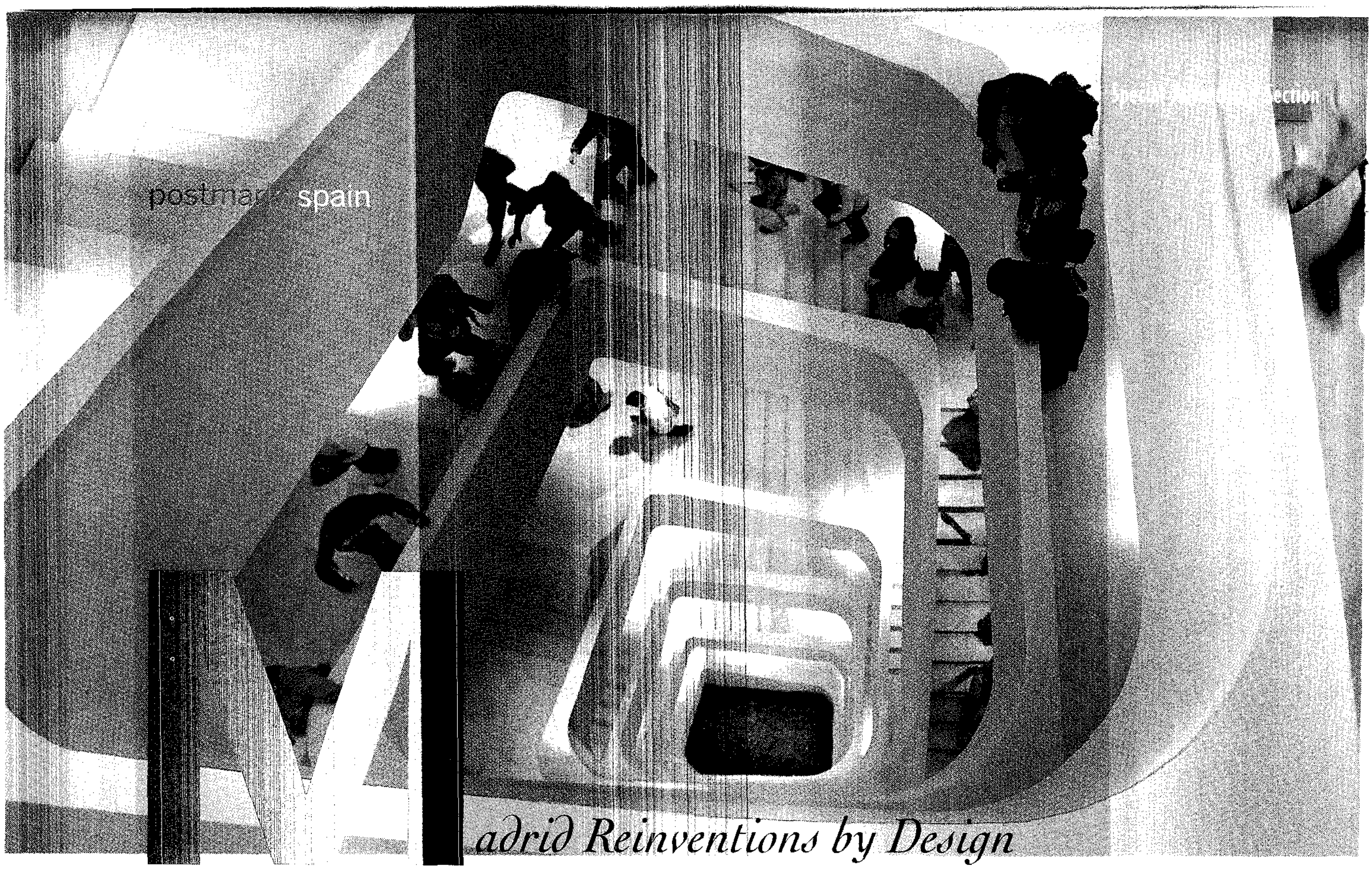

Madrid Reinventions by Design

The main exhibition at **CaixaForum Madrid**, running through January 17th, is devoted to the work of the Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580). Through hundreds of drawings, models, and paintings it shows how Palladio brought the beauty of classical form to the solving of practical problems. It's a fascinating way to begin exploring some of Madrid's recent architectural "reinventions," which have made clever use of existing buildings both humble and grand, beginning with CaixaForum itself.

The arts center opened last year near the Prado Museum in a structure designed by Herzog & de Meuron to make the most of the 1899 power station on the site. Seeming to virtually lift the bulky brick structure off the ground, the Swiss architects created an inviting shaded plaza beneath several floors of galleries. The upper stories are clad in rust-hued perforated steel and an adjacent wall displays an eighty-foot-high vertical garden, also known as the **Living Wall**, created by the botanist and innovator Patrick Blanc. The textures and colors have an embracing effect on the vast space—setting the right mood for another current exhibition, the haunting photos and films of the British artist Hannah Collins, through February 21st.

Citing just two examples, Madrid's architectural redesigns join the future to the past with the repurposing of the CaixaForum (top) and the ME Madrid Reina Victoria (above).

IMAGES, FROM THE TOP: CAIXAFORUM STAIRCASE ©JAVIER GUTIÉRREZ MARCOS; ME MADRID REINA VICTORIA ©ENRIQUE J. OCAÑA

An even more massive historic structure, the eighteenth-century Conde Duque military barracks, became the anchor of a hip new neighborhood, often called the SoHo of Madrid, when the city and the architect Julio Cano Lasso began transforming it into the multiuse **Centro Cultural Conde Duque** decades ago. Still a work in progress, the three-block-long building holds the **Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art**, with its notable Madrid School paintings. The center's temporary exhibition of luxurious eighteenth-century porcelain and silver, ending in January, offers a fine start to an exploration of the neighborhood's stylish boutiques.

As part of another repurposing, this time of a century-old abattoir, the **Matadero Madrid**, a contemporary arts center, is housed in reconstructed cattle pens, a huge vibrant space. The center, which has free admission and late hours, offers films, concerts, and exhibitions and draws those seeking a sample of Madrid's cutting edge.

Perhaps the city's most ambitious reinvention has been of its own skyline. In the last few years new silhouettes have risen in the **Cuatro Torres** business area, on the site of former soccer fields including Spain's tallest building, the 820-foot-high **Caja Madrid Tower**, designed by Norman Foster; three other towers are nearly as high. Travelers who want rooms with great views will find them in the new **Hotel Eurostars Madrid Tower**, which occupies thirty floors of the **Sacyr Vallehermoso Tower**, designed by the Spanish architects Carlos Rubio Carvajal and Enrique Álvarez-Sala Walther.

At the centrally located **ME Madrid Reina Victoria** hotel, guests enjoy both a commanding vantage from the rooftop bar and a step across a threshold of time. From the outside, the early-twentieth-century building still looks like the famous matadors' hangout it once was, but inside, sleek décor places you right in the moment of Madrid's redesign.

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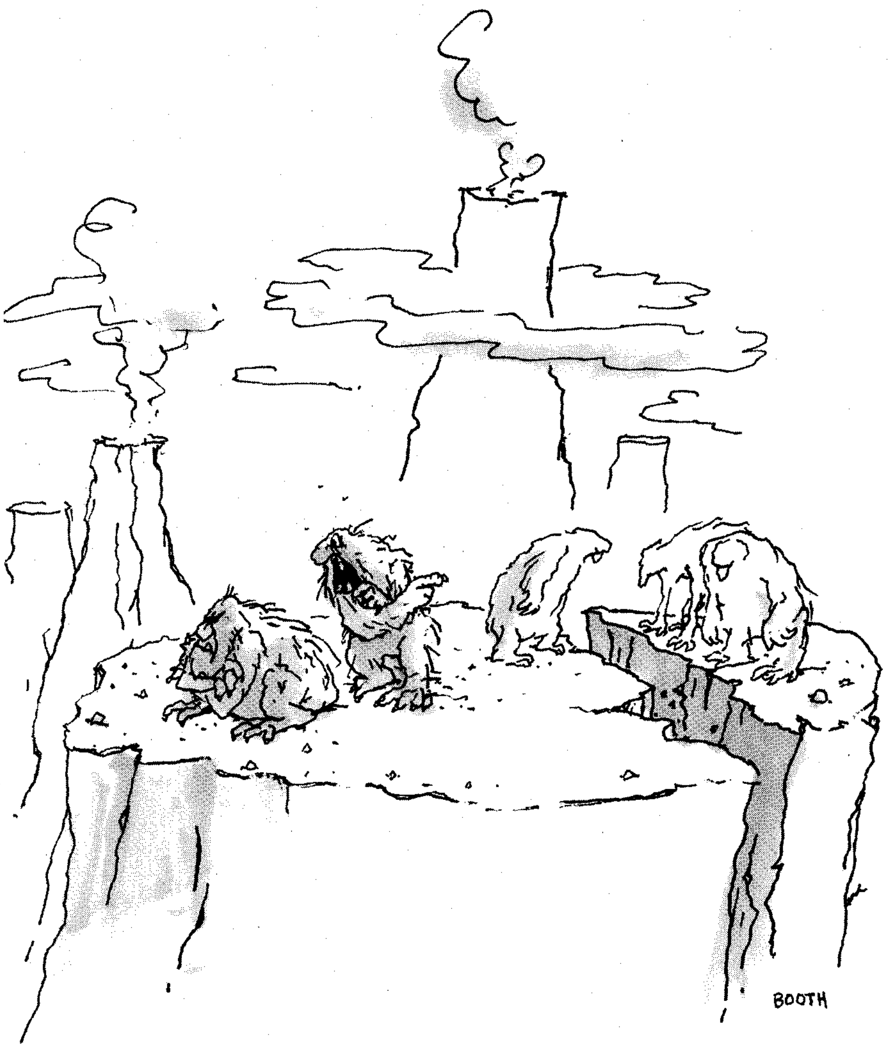
founding members, told me. Evans was an architect and ecologist who'd done research and volunteer work in Guatemala and was then teaching at Oregon State. Instead of exporting American know-how to the Third World, he and a small group of artists and academics decided, they would try to teach Americans to live more sustainably. "We would bring in villagers from Kenya or Lesotho, have them stay with us, and teach us what they knew—everything from cooking to growing things to assessing how much is too much." They would build a model Third World village in the Oregon woods.

In 1981, with the help of a Canadian foundation, the group bought forty acres of second-growth timber five miles west of Cottage Grove. The land lay on a south-facing slope at the end of a logging road. It was rough, marginally fertile ground, wet year-round and often freezing in the winter. But the new owners spared no effort in improving it. They deep-tilled the soil and enriched it with compost. They planted pear, apple, and quince trees, a grape arbor, and a bamboo grove. They built a library, a workshop, an adobe hut, and passive solar cabins, and, to top it all, a giant tree house thirty feet above the ground. To neighbors or passersby they might have seemed like squatters, yet they were ambitious, industrious, self-serious folk. *Aprovecho*, in Spanish, means "I make good use of."



"There has been a split among the party faithful."

Deforestation was the issue of the moment, and Evans believed that stoves were an ideal solution. A few years earlier, at a research center in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, he and a team of local craftsmen had tested a variety of designs and materials and brought in cooks to try them out. "Any fool can do technical things," he told me. "But if people don't want it, don't bother." The team eventually hit upon a mixture of sand, clay, and pumice that was stable and freely available. They cast it into a massive hearth, about waist-high, carved out a firebox, burners, and interior channels to direct the heat, then added a chimney for the smoke. They dubbed it Lorena, after the Spanish words for mud and sand, *lodo* and *arena*.

The Lorena never made many inroads to American kitchens, but it was an immediate hit internationally. While Evans was still testing it, a United Nations representative saw the stove and persuaded him to publish the design. "The facts are stunning," Evans wrote, in a 1979 book on the Lorena. "Data from several sources indicate that improved stoves—and of these the Lorena stove appears to have advantages over the others—can save one-half to three-quarters or more of the wood normally used in cooking." Projects for the Peace Corps, World Bank, USAID, and the governments of Senegal and Lesotho followed, often inspiring others in turn. In some areas, the Lorena was so popular that its name became a generic term: it simply meant "improved stove."

In one sense, though, it was no improvement at all. The Lorena was good at removing smoke and preventing burns (no small things). It was handsome, easy to use, and helped warm the house. What it didn't do was save fuel—at least compared with a well-tended open fire. Its thick walls, rather than concentrating the heat, absorbed it: the stove warmed the room because it wasn't warming the food. Studies later found that the Lorena used up to twice as much wood as an open fire and needed up to three times as long to boil a pot of water. "It sounds funny, but there are still people making Lorenas today," Dean Still says. "They don't understand the difference between insulation and a heat sink."

By the time Still arrived at Aprovecho, in the summer of 1989, funding for stoves had dried up. The Lorena, as it turned out, was only one of hundreds of well-meaning but misconceived projects worldwide. There were mud stoves that dissolved in the rain, designer stoves that worked only with a certain pot, portable stoves that fell over when you stirred cornmeal mush on them. In 1983, the Indian government launched a national program that distributed some thirty-five million stoves across the subcontinent. The units came in various designs from local manufacturers; most were neither sturdy nor especially efficient. Several years later, when a doctoral student from Berkeley surveyed the results in Andhra Pradesh, she found a single stove still in use—as a bin for grain.

"They were good-hearted people," Still says of his predecessors at Aprovecho. "But they were idealistic artists. They were farmers and architects and artisans more than they were engineers." Still didn't seem, on the face of it, much better qualified. Before coming to Aprovecho, he'd worked in a trauma ward in Illinois, lived in a trapper's cabin in Colorado, and served as a security guard on an ocean freighter. He had owned a gas station, worked as a janitor in a synagogue, earned a master's degree in clinical psychology but never used it professionally—"Not one day," he says. Instead, he built a seagoing catamaran with two friends and crisscrossed the Pacific in it. Then he sold the boat, moved to Baja, built a thatched hut by the Sea of Cortez, and stayed there for nine years. "My idea was this," he says. "Can Dean learn to sit under a tree and be contented?"

The answer was no. But his wanderings left him oddly suited to building stoves. He was a skilled carpenter and designer, used to improvising with cheap materials. He was intimately familiar with the needs and hazards of life in developing countries. And he was a born community organizer. His parents, Douglas and Hanna Still, were political activists in the heroic sixties mold. They'd worked with César Chávez in California, the Black Panthers in Chicago, and Martin Luther King, Jr., in the South. (King and Still's father, who was a Presbyterian minister, spent a night in jail together in Albany, Georgia, after a protest.) By the age of thirteen, Dean was tagging along to a civil-rights rally in Milwaukee, wearing a "Black Power" T-shirt among crowds of bellowing racists. At sixteen, he was among the rioters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, narrowly escaping arrest. His parents always encouraged him to be a freethinker, he says. "So when I was in seventh or eighth grade I told them, 'You're right. School is just a training ground for cogs. I'm going to quit and have adventures.' "

Still was first drawn to Aprovecho by its work in sustainable agriculture and forestry. But it was the stoves that kept him there. Not long after he arrived, in 1989, he met a local inventor named Larry Winiarski—a mild, bespectacled, dumpling-shaped man in his forties, perennially clad in overalls. Winiarski had a doctorate in engineering from Oregon State and had worked for the E.P.A. for thirteen years, analyzing the heat discharge from power plants. It didn't take him long to spot the Lorena's inadequacies.

Working as a volunteer, Winiarski sketched out ten principles of stove design and began to build prototypes with Evans and other Aprovecho members. The new devices, which they called rocket stoves, for the powerful roar of their draft, were the physical opposite of the Lorena. They were small and lightweight, so that little heat was wasted on warming the stove itself. They had vertical combustion chambers that acted as chimneys, mixing the wood's volatile gases with air so that the rockets burned more efficiently. And they had well-insulated walls that forced the hot gases through narrow gaps around the pot, heating it as quickly as possible.

"Larry is one of those rare people in my life, when you ask him a question about stoves he's almost always right," Still says. "He just really, really understands fire." Aprovecho went on to build a number of rocket stoves and to publicize them in books and newsletters, but the group's loyalty still lay with the Lorena. "People were basically ignoring Larry when I showed up," Still told me. "Hippies love earthen structures." The community's open-air kitchen, for instance, was dominated by a clay bread oven that took hours to heat up and consumed great quantities of firewood. With Winiarski's guidance, Still conducted an experiment. Next to the bread oven, he built a simple rocket stove. It was made of a fifty-five-gallon drum, laid horizontally, with a thirty-three-gallon drum inside it and a rocket combustion chamber below. The new stove looked nothing like a traditional bread oven, yet it was hot within fourteen minutes on the strength of a few twigs. An hour later, when the bread was done, the clay oven was still warming up. "That's what won people over," Still says.

Over the next few years, Still and Winiarski built ever more elaborate devices for the community: room heaters, water heaters, jet-pulse engines, wood-fired refrigerators. They were just tinkering, mostly, in the absence of funding for more ambitious work. Aprovecho, by then, was in turmoil. Evans was evicted from the property in the early nineties, after a dispute over the community's finances. Then county inspectors declared the tree house and other structures illegal, and everything had to be torn down, rebuilt, and reorganized. "It was a hippie nightmare," Still says.

To Peter Scott, who came to Aprovecho in 1997, the situation seems not uncommon. "People in environmental communities tend to be escaping from normal society," he told me. "If things were great where they came from, they wouldn't have left. And that sort of opens us up to the pain of the world and what's happening to it. We're all a little crazy, maybe." Scott was twenty-eight when he showed up in Oregon and already a veteran activist. In British Columbia, where he was born, he had stood in front of bulldozers on logging roads, climbed old-growth trees to spare them the axe, and acted in an environmental-theatre troupe. An article on solar cookers in *Mother Jones* first led him to Aprovecho, he says—that and memories of a trip to the Congo and the denuded landscapes there. "I'm here to save the forests of Africa by building stoves!" he remembers declaring on his first day. Dean Still just laughed and told him to go pick some vegetables.

Even more than new designs, Still began to realize, stovemakers needed data—to win back their credibility with reliable laboratory and field research. In 2000, when the stove lab was just a toolshed in the woods, Aprovecho built its first emissions detector and began testing Winiarski's designs. By 2004, Still had grants from the E.P.A. and the Shell Foundation to test stoves from other programs. By 2006, when the lab moved to Fred's Island, it had half a million dollars in funding and a staff of scrappy young engineers. (Nordica MacCarty, the lab manager, runs her jury-rigged Datsun on French-fry oil from a local diner. Karl Walter, the electronics designer, once built an airplane by hand and flew it to New York.) The research center now supports itself, in good part, with sales of microprocessor-controlled portable emissions detectors, designed and built in-house. The hippie commune has become a quality-control center.

Early in October, Still and I flew to Guatemala to visit the world's longest-running stove study. The village of San Lorenzo, where it's based, is in the remote western highlands, close to nine thousand feet above sea level. It feels like one of the world's forgotten places—its houses, made of mud and straw, cling to terraces that look out over plunging valleys and volcanic peaks—yet its cooks are among the most closely observed in the world. Walk into many local kitchens, and you'll find, attached to the walls or in the children's clothes, an array of electronic sensors and transmitters. Some measure particle emissions; others are motion detectors or carbon-monoxide monitors. Next to the chimney, on top of the stove, is a piece of black duct tape with a small silver disk beneath it. Plug the disk into a Palm Pilot, and it will tell you exactly when and for how long that stove was used in the previous month.

In seventeenth-century England, when a stovemaker wanted to test a new design, he'd soak a piece of coal in cat's urine and throw it into the fire. If the stench went up the chimney with the smoke, the design was deemed a success. Stove-testing is more of a numbers game now: minutes to boil, grams of fuel, milligrams of black carbon. Yet the practical effects of those numbers aren't always clear—especially on the emissions side. "We have no idea how low you have to go before you get the majority of the health benefits," Jacob Moss told me. "Is it peak exposures you want to get rid of, or is pollution a steady-state thing? Rocket stoves still have a whole slew of emissions that are an order of magnitude higher than E.P.A. standards." Cutting them in half, or even by two-thirds, may not be enough, he said.

The study that Still and I observed was aimed squarely at such uncertainties. Its detectors were the work of Kirk Smith, a professor of global environmental health at Berkeley and one of the world's leading authorities on indoor air pollution. Seven years ago, Smith and a team of students, researchers, and Guatemalan collaborators began tracking more than five hundred local families, all with pregnant mothers or infants less than four months old. The families were divided, at random, into two groups. Half were given plancha stoves with

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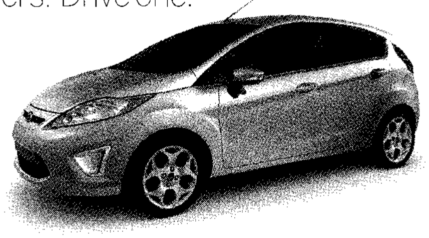


*EPA-estimated Fusion 41 city/36 hwy mpg, midsize class per R. L. Polk & Co; Escape 34 city/31 hwy/32 combined mpg, FWD, small SUV class. **Mustang coming spring 2010 with automatic; Fiesta coming summer 2010 with SFE Package. Ford preliminary data. Pending EPA certification. †Coming late 2011.

chimneys; the other half continued to cook over open fires. (After two years, when the first phase of the study was over, the second group got stoves as well.) Every week, Smith's team would give the families a medical checkup and download the data from its sensors. In this way, they could track their pollution exposure and its effects in real time. "My wife likes to say that most men spend their lives watching women cook," Smith says. "Her husband has managed to make a career of it."

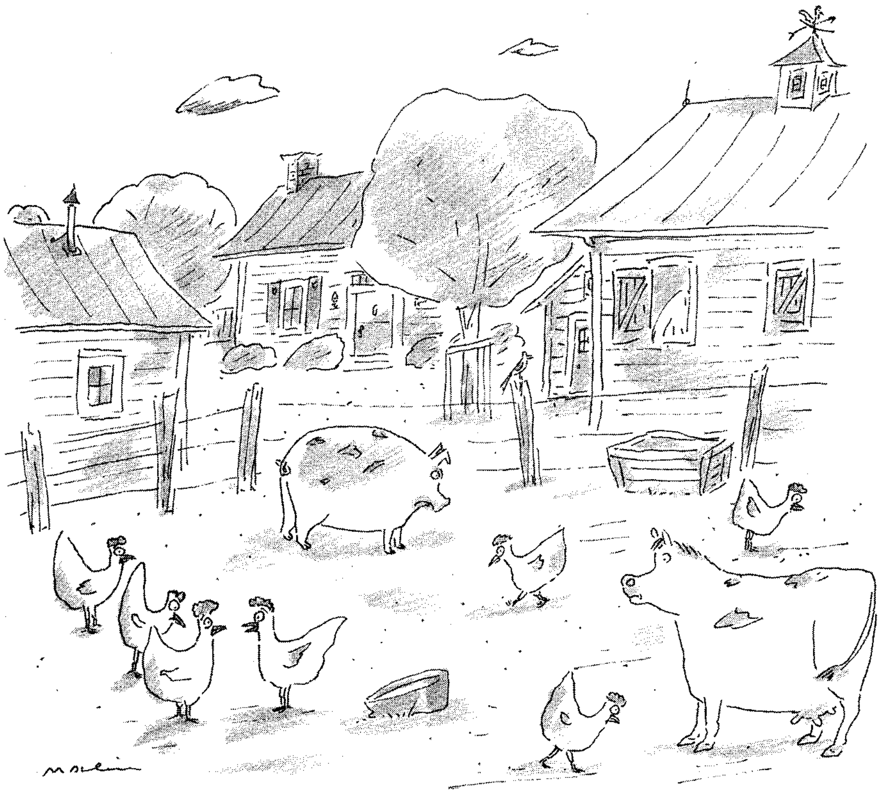
Smith is a rumpled sixty-two-year-old with tousled gray hair and eyelids as heavy as a basset hound's—he seems both tireless and perpetually short of sleep. When Still and I drove up to his site with him from Guatemala City, he spoke absorbingly, and almost continuously, for six hours about public health. (Last June, for a vacation, he took his wife and daughter to Chernobyl.) San Lorenzo is a six-hour flight plus layover on the red-eye from San Francisco, followed by a vertiginous trek, by truck or multicolored bus, up whipsawing mountain roads. For three years, Smith made the trip every month. His funders left him little choice, he told us.

"I'd go to an air-pollution conference and show them my measurements, and they'd say, 'Good Lord, these are orders of magnitude higher than in our cities! And these are the most vulnerable populations in the world. Just go out and fix it!'" Instead of funding stove projects, though, they'd pass him along to the next agency. "So I'd go across the street, to the international health meeting," Smith went on, "and they'd say, 'Well, Mr. Smith, you have a pretty convincing problem, but we have seven dollars a year per capita. Do you really expect us to take a dollar out of our budget for vaccines? We need to be damn certain that we can make a difference.'" The pharmaceutical companies had dozens of randomized trials to back up their claims. What did Smith have?

San Lorenzo is his answer. The study, which was funded by the N.I.H. in 2001, now generates so much information that Smith needs two full-time workers to enter it into computers. On the morning after we arrived, Still and I joined the team on their rounds through the village. While Still scrutinized the stoves and suggested ways to improve them (he and Smith were hatching plans for a more efficient "hyper plancha"), I sat and watched the women cook. Diminutive and shy, in their bright embroidered blouses and tapestry skirts, they quietly answered questions as their children clutched their legs or peeked out from behind doorframes. The houses were low-ceilinged and bare, with earthen floors, corrugated roofs, and a tree stump or two for furniture. Some had sheaves of Indian corn drying from the rafters, or raised eaves that allowed a little light to leak in. A field hand in San Lorenzo makes about twenty dollars a week, Smith said—"Truth be told, they haven't recovered since Cortez." But in most of the houses with stoves at least the air was clear. In those with open fires it hung so thick and noxious that the walls were blackened, the joists and beams shaggy with creosote. It was like sitting inside a smoker's lung.

Near the end of our rounds, we paid a visit to Angela Jiménez, a small, sharp-featured woman who was part of Smith's original control group. Jiménez is thirty-five and has five children, including four-month-old twins. When we walked in, she was simmering a pot of corn for tortillas and sautéing a *recado de pescado*—a thin brown sauce made with dried fish and cornmeal, ground together on a slab of volcanic rock. Smith's team had given her a stove six years earlier, but she hadn't bothered to maintain it. The clay tiles and steel griddle were pocked with holes, and smoke was billowing into the room. On the wall behind the stove, the team had hung a poster explaining the dangers of carbon monoxide, but the words were too covered in soot to be legible.

We were getting ready to leave when Jiménez's nine-year-old son, Wilder, lurched in with his baby sister, Milvia, in his arms. She was tightly bundled in blankets, with a blue-and-white knit cap on. Her face was covered in dried phlegm and she was crying hard, with a steady, wheezing cough. Jiménez lifted her up and laid her against her shoulder. Her daughter had been sick for eight days, she told us, and was running a fever. "You should take her to the clinic," Smith said. "Eight days is a long time at that age." Jiménez looked at him with hooded eyes and turned back to the stove. If she went to the clinic, they'd just



"That's not what I heard. I heard they're keeping the pig and getting rid of five chickens."

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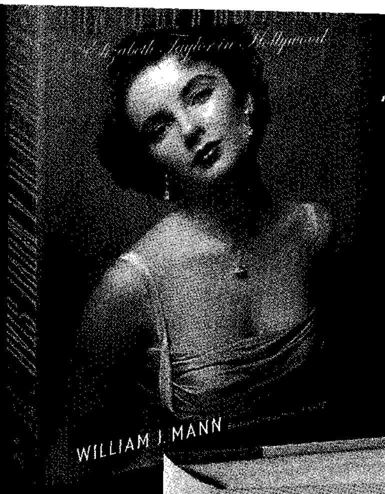
Elizabeth Taylor in Hollywood
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"Yummier than digging into a hot-fudge sundae and a stack of *US Weeklys*." –*USA Today*

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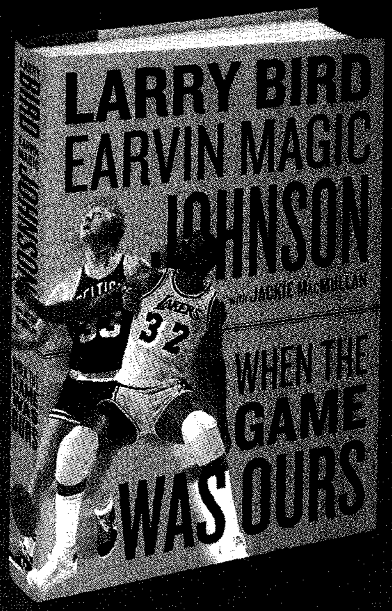
LARRY BIRD
EARVIN MAGIC JOHNSON
with JACKIE MacMULLAN
WHEN THE GAME WAS OURS

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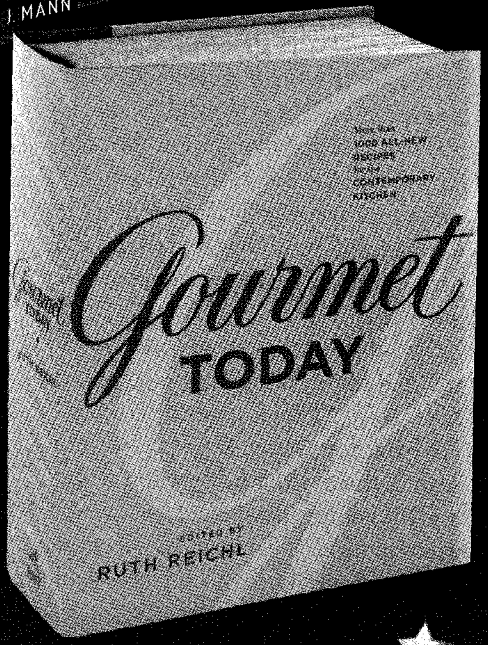
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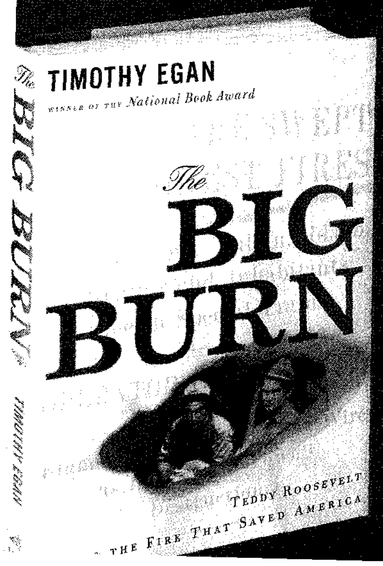
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WINNER OF THE National Book Award
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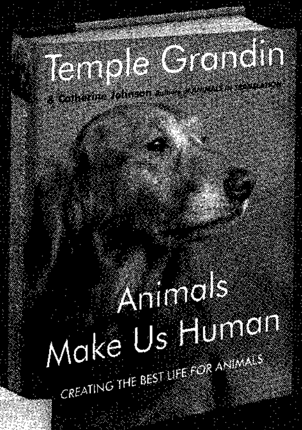
THE HUMBLING
PHILIP ROTH


Temple Grandin
& Catherine Johnson
Animals Make Us Human
CREATING THE BEST LIFE FOR ANIMALS

"For pet owners, Temple Grandin's perspective is invaluable." –*Entertainment Weekly*, A-

"Eloquent and important." Michiko Kakutani

send her to the hospital, she said. "And that's where people go to die."

Smith later prevailed upon Jiménez to let his team drive her to his clinic, where a physician gave both infants a diagnosis of severe pneumonia. Milvia was hypoxic: her lungs were so full of fluid that they couldn't get enough oxygen into her blood. Her twin brother, Selby, was even sicker: his blood was only eighty-two per cent oxygenated, and his lungs made crackling noises under a stethoscope. "He could pass away tonight," Smith said. Pneumonia is the leading killer of children worldwide, and San Lorenzans are especially susceptible to it. They're so malnourished that their height, at eighteen months, is already two standard deviations below the norm. And their immune systems are further weakened by the toxins in wood smoke. On average, Smith has found, the children in the village get pneumonia every other year.

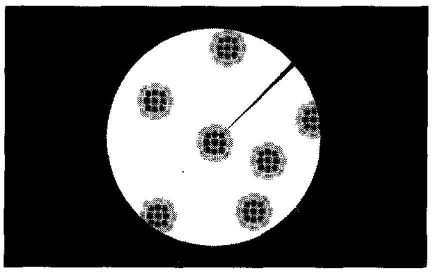
"So this is the bottom line," he told me that night, bringing up a graph on his laptop. "This is seventeen years of applying for grants, seven years of research, three and a half million dollars, and me coming down here for a week of every month." Thanks to his electronic sensors, Smith knew his subjects' cooking habits in microscopic detail. He knew when they lit the stove but left the room while it was burning. He knew how much smoke was in the air when they were cooking and how much carbon monoxide was in their breath. And by combining such data with their weekly medical records he could show, for the first time, how the risk of disease increased with exposure—what epidemiologists call a dose-response curve.

"For groups like the Gates Foundation and USAID, the metric is cost-effectiveness," Moss had told me. "How many people are you going to save with a hundred million dollars? That's what they want from this field, and they don't have it yet." Until now. Smith had data on half a dozen diseases that a decent stove could help prevent (it could lower blood pressure about as much as a low-salt diet, for instance). But the most dramatic numbers were for pneumonia. The graph on his laptop had an x-axis for exposure and a y-axis for disease. In between, the data followed a steeply rising curve. The children who inhaled the least smoke were between sixty-five and eighty-five per cent less likely to contract severe pneumonia than those who inhaled the most.

"Those numbers are as good as for any vaccine," Smith said. The plancha stoves cost about a hundred dollars each, yet they were a bargain in public-health terms. "In our country, we pay forty thousand dollars per year of life saved," Smith said. "Even if you take the lower end of the benefit, this would cost at most a few hundred dollars per life-year. It's a no-brainer." In a country like India, he and a team of co-authors later estimated, in an article in *The Lancet*, stoves could save more than two million lives in ten years.

Smith's data may be good enough for the Gates Foundation, but the harder part will be convincing local villagers. Most of the San Lorenzans liked their stoves, and maintained them well enough. But they considered the smoke from cooking more of an annoyance than a threat. (In Africa, some even welcome it as a defense against flies and mosquitoes.) "These kinds of correlations just aren't that easy to make," Smith said. "Think of cigarettes. They kill one out of two smokers prematurely—no war has ever had that effect. Yet famous scientists have died saying there is no connection." To imagine cooking as harmful is an even greater leap. "It's not cyanide," Still said. "They can always think of an eighty-nine-year-old who's been cooking over an open fire all her life. And Grandma's doing just fine."

The best examples of this insouciance, in San Lorenzo, were the wood-fired saunas that most of the villagers used. The tradition dated back to the ancient Mayans, who would heat rocks over an outdoor fire and carry them into a stone bathhouse. The modern version, known as a *chuj*, was just a mud-caked hut about the size of a large doghouse. It had an open fire inside, a pallet to lie on, and a blanket to seal the door. A *chuj* was essentially a human smokehouse, yet the same villagers who swore by their plancha stoves—including Vincente Tema, one of Smith's Guatemalan staff—took sauna baths once or twice a week for half an hour. (The baths were especially good for pregnant women, they said.) When I asked Tema if I could try his *chuj*, Smith shrugged. I might want to take a carbon-monoxide monitor with me, he said.



The experience wasn't altogether unpleasant—there are worse things, apparently, than becoming a giant slab of bacon. But by the time I stumbled out, sixteen minutes later, my head was swimming. When Smith later downloaded the monitor's data at his office, it showed the carbon monoxide in the *chuj* spiking to five hundred parts per million, then abruptly levelling off. The program wasn't designed to show levels any higher than that, he explained. "Oh, buddy," Still said, staring at the screen. "If you'd gone to a thousand for ten minutes, you'd be in a coma now."

Stories like these were a source of endless frustration to stovemakers. The trouble with tradition, they'd found, is that it can be remarkably thickheaded. Ignore it, and your shiny new stove may get turned into a flowerpot. Cater to it, and you may end up with a new version of the same old problem. The campers in Cottage Grove spent half their time agonizing over cultural sensitivity ("We're highly dominated by elderly white engineering types," a stovemaker who'd worked in Uganda told me. "So you get a lot of preposterous ideas that'll never fly in the kitchen") and the other half grousing about "design drift." Too many stoves start out as marvels of efficiency, they said, and are gradually modified into obsolescence. Once the engineer is gone, the local builder may widen the stove's mouth so it can burn larger sticks, only to draw in too much cold air. Or he'll make the stove out of denser bricks, not realizing that the air pockets in the clay are its best insulation. The better the stove, the tighter its tolerances, the easier it is to ruin.

"When we first got into this, we had this utopian vision of working with local communities to build locally grown stoves," the E.P.A.'s Jacob Moss told me. "We've moved away from that—I

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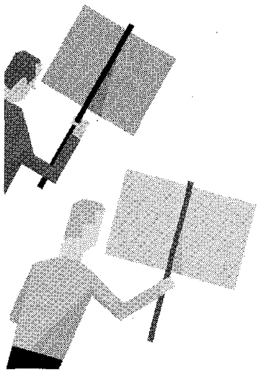
won't say a hundred and eighty degrees, but maybe a hundred and sixty. I don't really listen to small stove projects anymore. When I hear Dean say that one millimetre can make a nontrivial difference, it's inconceivable to me that all these local stovemakers can make all these stoves efficiently. You have to work in a different way."



Three years ago, on a taxi ride in southern China, Still had a glimpse of the future. He was working as a consultant for the E.P.A. at the time, passing through the city of Kunming, when he spotted some odd little stoves for sale on a street corner. He shouted for the driver to stop and stepped outside to examine one. "It was like Shangri-La," he told me. The stove was meant for burning coal, so its design was all wrong for wood, but it was sturdy, compact, and cleanly manufactured. More important, its combustion chamber was made of a hard yet miraculously light and porous clay—a combination that stovemakers had been scouring the earth to find. "There, in this two-dollar coal burner, was everything needed to make the world's perfect rocket stove," Still says.

The stove had a telephone number printed on it, so Still called it on his cell phone. Two months later, he was visiting the factory where the stove was built, in eastern China. Within two years, the factory was producing a stove to Aprovecho's specifications. Sold under the name StoveTec, it isn't much to look at: a hollow clay tube, clad in green sheet metal, with an opening in front and a pot support on top. But it incorporates all ten rocket-design principles with a consistency that only mass production can offer. The StoveTec uses about half as much wood as an open fire, produces less than half as much smoke, and sells for eight dollars wholesale. In the United States, where it retails for five times as much, it has been especially popular among Mormons and survivalists.

Still's stove is a kind of proof of principle. It shows that an efficient, user-friendly stove can be mass-produced at a cost that even the very poor can afford. But it also shows what's missing. The StoveTec isn't suited to some dishes—tortillas, chapatis, heavy porridges—and its life expectancy is less than two years. While it's much less smoky than an open fire, it can't quite meet the Waxman-Markey standards.

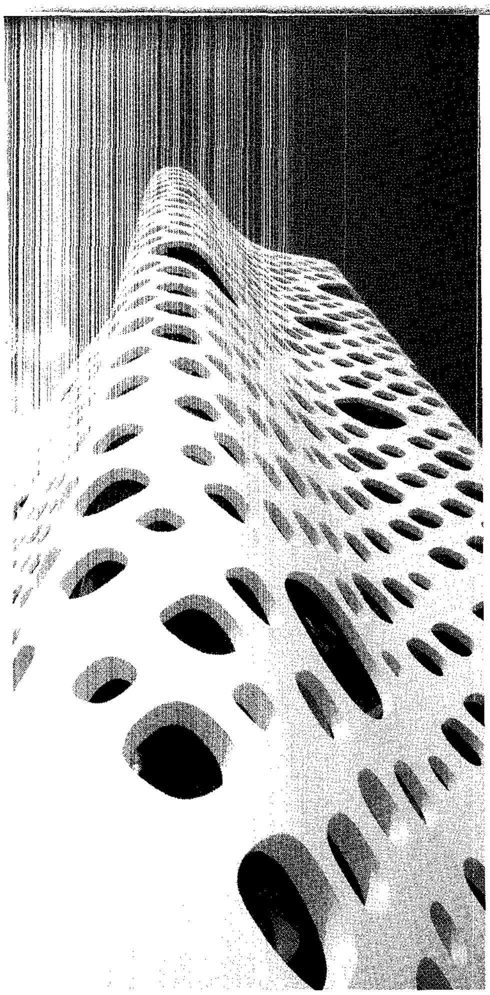
The search for the perfect stove continues, in other words. Not long before Stove Camp, I visited a company called Envirofit, in Fort Collins, Colorado. Envirofit's laboratories are housed at Colorado State University, in a converted power plant from the nineteen-thirties. On the morning of my tour, half a dozen experiments were going on simultaneously. One glass case held nine stoves, all furiously burning pellets fed to them by an automatic hopper. Across the room, the smoke was being parsed into its chemical components by a rack of blinking machinery. (Wood smoke may not be cyanide, as Still put it, but hydrogen cyanide turns out to be one of its trace elements.) On a catwalk upstairs, a programmer was modelling green and yellow flames on his computer, while a biologist down the hall was subjecting live human lung cells to wood smoke. "We grow them in the basement, but they're fully functional," I was told. "They even produce phlegm."

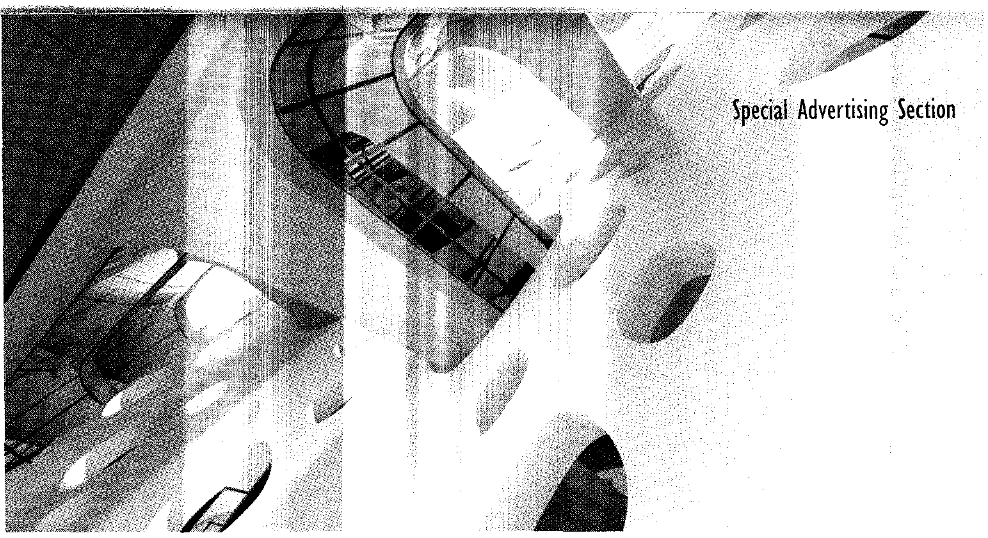
Envirofit's C.E.O., Ron Bills, is a former executive of Segway, Yamaha, and Bombardier. His new company is technically a non-profit, yet Bills believes that stovemakers, for too long, have treated the developing world as a charity ward instead of a business opportunity. "A lot of the poor—call them emerging consumers—get inundated with crummy stuff," he told me. "So we're going back to Henry Ford." Envirofit's first new product was essentially a rebranded version of Aprovecho's stove, made by the same Chinese factory with a few improvements in durability and design. In July, however, the company unveiled a new model. It was shaped like an ordinary rocket stove, though much more stylish, and had a major innovation at its core: a durable metal combustion chamber. Made of an alloy developed together with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, in Tennessee, it could withstand the caustic fumes of a wood fire for more than five years, yet cost only three dollars a unit to produce. The Envirofit combustion chamber could be shipped for a fraction of the cost of a fully built stove, and adapted to local designs and cooking traditions. It was mass production and appropriate technology rolled into one.

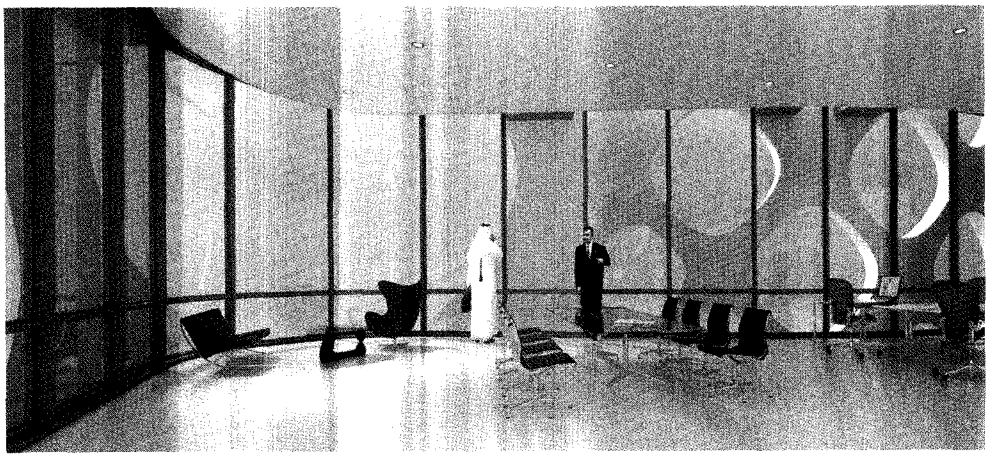
"That's the goose that laid the golden egg right there," Bills told me. "That's the Intel inside." He had nothing against groups like Aprovecho, he said. They could continue to hold their Stove Camps and sell their stoves made out of clay. "But Henry Ford didn't stop with the Model T. If we are going to make an impact in my lifetime, it has to be done at scale. And when you have a three-billion-product opportunity, what is enough scale? One million, two million, five million? I like to dream big." Thanks, hippies, he seemed to be saying. Now, please step aside.

On the last day of Stove Camp, I stumbled out of bed late, in search of coffee—the timber train having catapulted me awake, as usual, four hours earlier. Aprovecho was as busy as a science fair. The pulmonologist from N.I.H. was putting the finishing touches on a rocket stove made from an oil drum. A Norwegian designer was running emissions tests on a little tin gasifier. And another camper was watching emission measurements unspool across a laptop. "Look at that!" he shouted. "It's flatlining! There's almost no particulate matter!" On the whiteboard next door, the words "Save the World" had long since been erased and replaced with mathematical equations.

Scott and Andreatta were in the far corner of the workshop, probing their injera stove with an infrared thermometer. Their week had been a succession of setbacks and breakthroughs. When their first prototype, with its steel griddle, had too many hot spots, Scott had suggested that they try aluminum. It conducted heat even better than steel and was considerably cheaper. A few e-mails to Ethiopia had confirmed that the metal could be locally cast from recycled engine blocks. By the next morning, Andreatta had roughed out a plywood mold for the griddle and they'd taken it to a foundry in Eugene. But the design proved too complicated to cast—it had radiating





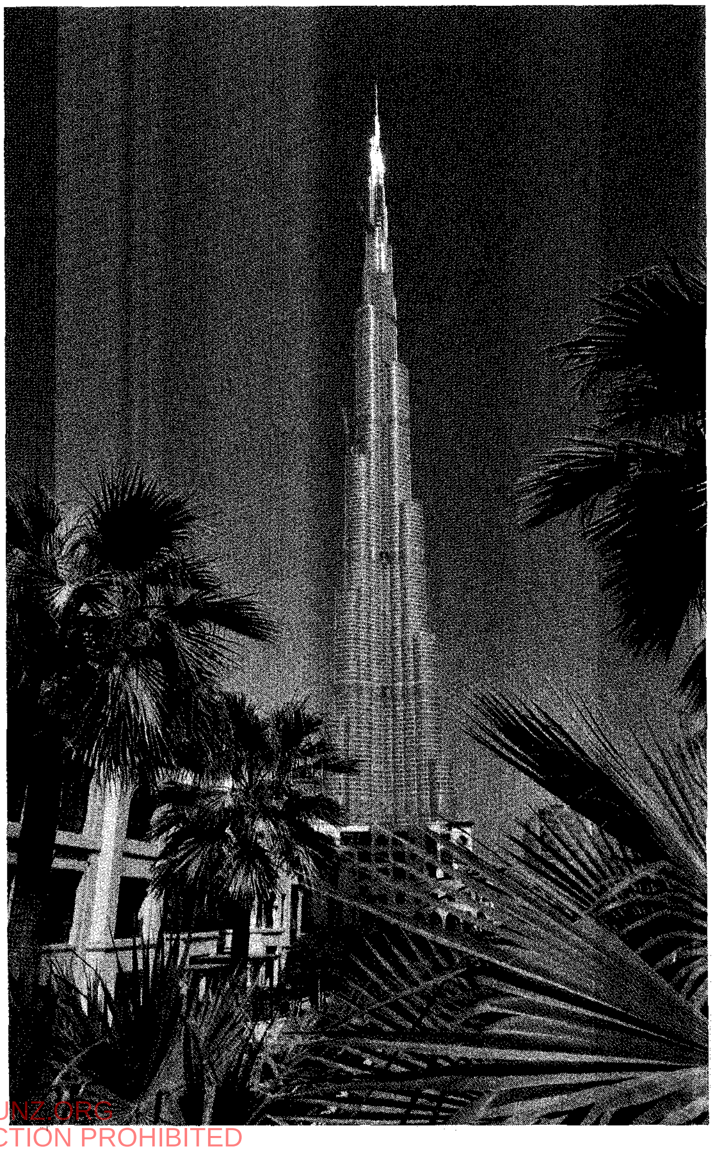


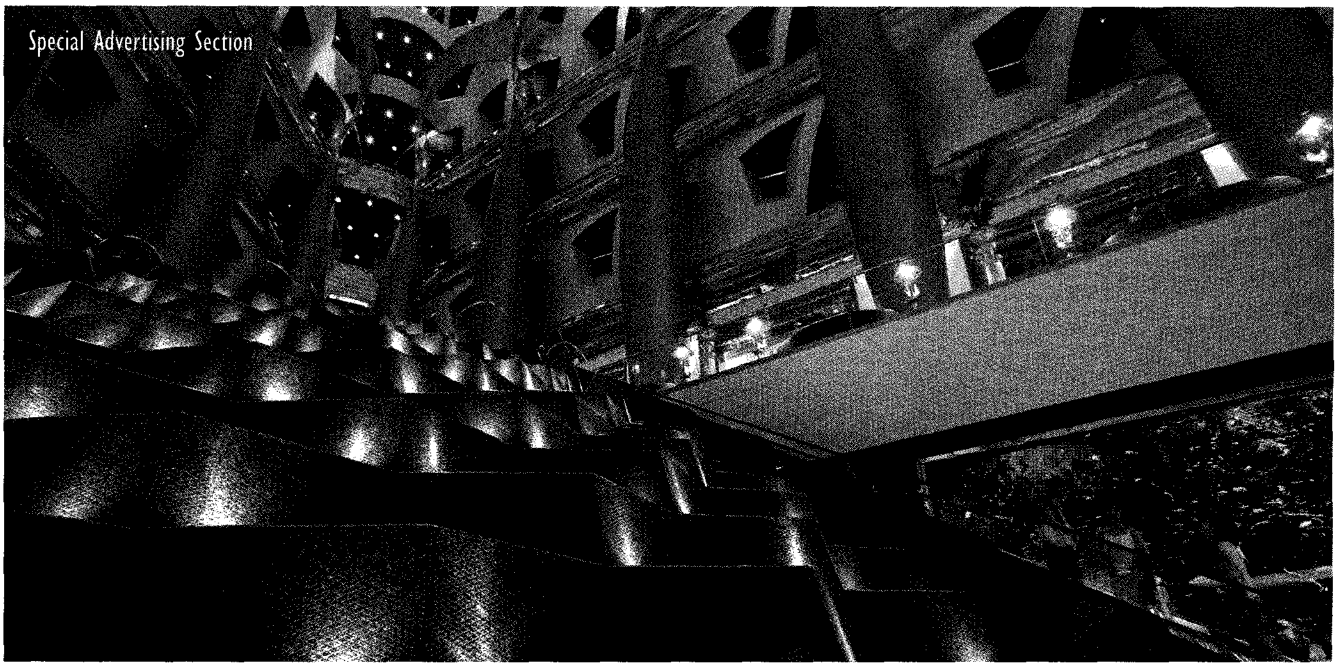
Starchitects Shaping an Emirate's Sky

The world's tallest building, the Burj Dubai, is poised to open in early January, and at more than two thousand six hundred feet in height, it is roughly a thousand feet higher than the previous record holder, Taipei 101.

"That's a massive jump," says Antony Wood, the executive director of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, a Chicago-based group that determines the "world's tallest" distinction. The assessment is made based on studying final architectural prints, not a physical measurement. But having been up to its highest residential floor during the construction process, Wood can attest to the awe-inspiring achievement. "Being at the top of the Burj Dubai is like nothing else," he says. "The only experience you can describe that's similar is like being in an airplane."

Unlike most skyscrapers, the Adrian Smith-designed **Burj Dubai** from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) is primarily a residential building, which allows for a smaller footprint and fewer elevators than offices typically need, making it easier to build higher. Even so, there are fifty-six elevators to access the building's one hundred and sixty floors, and the double-decker cabs that travel to the observation deck on the 124th floor can reach their destination in one minute flat.





That elevator ride is part of Burj Dubai's "At the Top of the World" visitor experience, which includes 360-degree views from the glass-enclosed observation deck and a balcony for those who dare to step outside. Beginning with the tour's entrance at the Dubai Mall, interactive multimedia exhibits will showcase the tower's extraordinary building process and logistical challenges like transporting thousands of workers up into the sky and pumping concrete to such great heights.

Special telescopes will provide real-time and historic views of Dubai, whose skyline and coastline have changed dramatically in recent years. From the man-made palm-shaped islands jutting out from the city's beaches to the high-rises lining Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai has established itself as an architectural innovator, transforming a sleepy desert outpost into a world-class destination.

Many of the city's bolder projects have pushed the boundaries of imagination. For instance, the **Burj Al Arab** hotel is a thousand-foot-tall skyscraper built on a sandy manmade island—a feat that involved designing a honeycomb-patterned base around the island's perimeter to prevent erosion from waves of the Persian Gulf. The hotel, designed by Tom Wright, to resemble the sail of a dhow has a Teflon-coated membrane that reflects sunlight, helping cool the building by day and transforming into a screen for a light show at night.

A remarkable structure now literally dotting the skyline is the twenty-two-story office building called **O-14** that is rising up in Dubai's Business Bay commercial district, which is being developed along an extension of Dubai Creek. Unlike most modern skyscrapers, which have a glass curtain-wall exterior, O-14 has a thick concrete façade with more than a thousand holes of different sizes, a design that takes its inspiration partly from decorative Islamic lattice screens.

"The big innovation was that we pulled all the structure to the outside of the building—an exoskeleton that also becomes a sunscreen," says Jesse Reiser, a co-founder of the New York City architecture firm Reiser + Umemoto, who designed O-14 with his partner Nanako Umemoto.

Since there is a three-foot gap between the perforated concrete shell and O-14's glass windows, air pulled in through the open holes rises up in a chimney effect, cooling the building's glazing. That feature is a modern twist on the old Arabic practice of creating structures with wind towers. In this case, it reduces cooling costs by thirty per cent. Besides this environmental benefit, the design also has interesting effects on the dappled light that enters the building.

"You don't have the same sense of horizon that you do in a normal building," Reiser says. "You get staccato snapshots of the skyline and the sky, and there's a variation in light and dark that I think will affect the way people organize their office space. It's a very different kind of ambience."

Yet another of O-14's design innovations is creating a colonnade at the base of the building, which will serve as a gateway to the waterfront esplanade of Business Bay. Reiser says that the goal was to allow the public to filter through the arcade, experiencing the unique façade at its base as well as connecting to the waterway—an idea the developer embraced.

"There's a spirit of experimentation in Dubai, and just the energy of building in a city like that is something you don't encounter often," Reiser says.

Indeed, some of the world's most daring designs have been envisioned with Dubai in mind. Architect and developer David Fisher hopes to build an intriguing **Dynamic Tower**, which would have eighty floors rotating independently at different speeds and directions and ideally generate its own electricity using wind turbines mounted between floors. The spiral-shaped **Infinity Tower**, designed by SOM, is a seventy-three-story residential tower being built in the Dubai Marina district that has a ninety-degree twist from its base to its roof—an unprecedented structural achievement.

With Dubai's abundant sunlight and desert winds, the landscape offers the potential to harness solar energy and wind power in ways developers and architects are just now working into their ambitious plans, and Wood believes insights gained from building the Burj Dubai will benefit future skyscrapers all over the world.

"We're learning so much," he says. "This is like flying to the moon."

Visit DefinitelyDubai.com for more information.

COVER IMAGES, CLOCKWISE: THE SOARING O-14 ©IMRE SOLT; O-14 DETAIL LOOKING SKYWARD COURTESY OF REISER + UMEMOTO ARCHITECTURE, PC; RENDERING OF O-14 INTERIOR COURTESY OF RUR; THE BURJ DUBAI ©SEBASTIAN OPITZ; *THIS PAGE:* THE BURJ AL ARAB HOTEL ATRIUM ©FRITZ MUELLER PHOTOGRAPHY

fins along the bottom to distribute the heat. So they'd settled on something simpler.

The new griddle was a third of an inch thick and flat on both sides. Andreatta had put a ceramic baffle beneath it to temper and diffuse the flames, but he still had his doubts. The melting point of aluminum is twelve hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit—about half as high as the peak temperature inside a rocket stove. If they weren't careful, the griddle would dissolve before their eyes. Andreatta switched on his L.E.D. headlamp and peered at the infrared thermometer. For now, the griddle was holding steady at four hundred and thirty-three degrees—just five degrees short of the target temperature. Better yet, the center was less than twenty-five degrees hotter than the outer edge. "Even Ethiopian women don't get it in that range," Scott said.

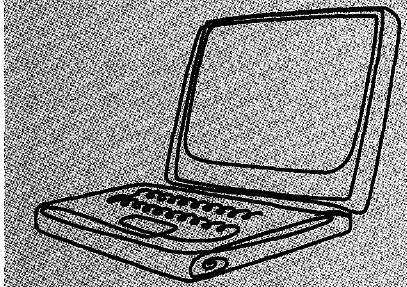
Still strolled by, wearing a T-shirt with a giant longhorn beetle on it. He had a groggy grin on his face, as if he'd just woken up to a redeemed and revitalized world. Sometimes he saw the stove community more as Ron Bills seemed to see it—as a gathering of undisciplined hobbyists, engaged in the equivalent of building iPods out of toothpicks and aluminum foil. But this wasn't one of those days. Earlier that summer, a research group under Vijay Modi, a professor of mechanical engineering at Columbia, had surveyed cooks in Uganda and Tanzania who had tested a variety of improved stoves. In both studies, the StoveTec/Envirofit design had won the highest rating, beating out the most recent Envirofit stove in the Tanzanian study. "My people, they aren't always very smart," Still had told me. But they were inventive, resourceful, and doggedly resilient. And, after thirty years of trial and error and endless field research, they understood fire very, very well.

The injera stove was the kind of project that might always fall to them. "What is the market for an improved cookstove, really?" Still said. "People hope that it's big, but we have an eight-dollar stove and it's not easy to sell. Everyone forgets that poor people are *really* poor." In Africa, where less than a quarter of the population has electricity and the most efficient technologies are beyond reach, an open fire can still seem hard to beat, if only because it's free. "But you know what? We're going to do it," Still said. "A lot of people think that if you don't make a whole lot of money at something it can't be good. I think those people are wrong. If you want to do what poor people need, and you really don't stop, you're not going to be rich. Not unless you're a lot smarter than I am."

Just before we broke camp the next morning, Scott came to find me in the meat locker: the prototype was ready for its first pancake. He and Andreatta had hoped to cook true injera bread for the occasion, but they couldn't find the time—or the teff—to make a proper sourdough. So they'd settled for Aunt Jemima. "This is our first test," Scott said, holding up a pitcher of pancake batter. "People of the world, cut us some slack." Then he poured it onto the hot griddle.

Over the next three months, the stove would go through more rounds of fiddling and redesign. The aluminum would prove too conductive for real injera and get swapped out for a traditional *mitad*. To get the ceramic to heat evenly, the baffles beneath it would have to be removed. At one point, in Addis Ababa, Scott would nearly abandon the project, only to have an Ethiopian cook make some key suggestions. Yet the result would be even better than it seemed on this sunny August morning: the world's first successful rocket injera stove—twice as efficient and many times more durable than those it was meant to replace.

As the batter hit the griddle, it spread into a circle that nearly reached the edge. Within a minute, it was bubbling up evenly across its surface. "Yeah, baby!" Scott said. "If we'd tried that last Friday, it would be blackened char in the middle." He slid a spatula under the batter and tried to flip it, leaving half on the griddle but the rest well browned. He stared at the pancake. "We can't really fucking believe it," he said. "I mean, these designs usually take months and you're still scratching your head." The stove was almost ready, he thought. Now they just had to convince a few million Ethiopians. ♦



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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE MONKEY AND THE FISH

Can Greg Carr save an African ecosystem?

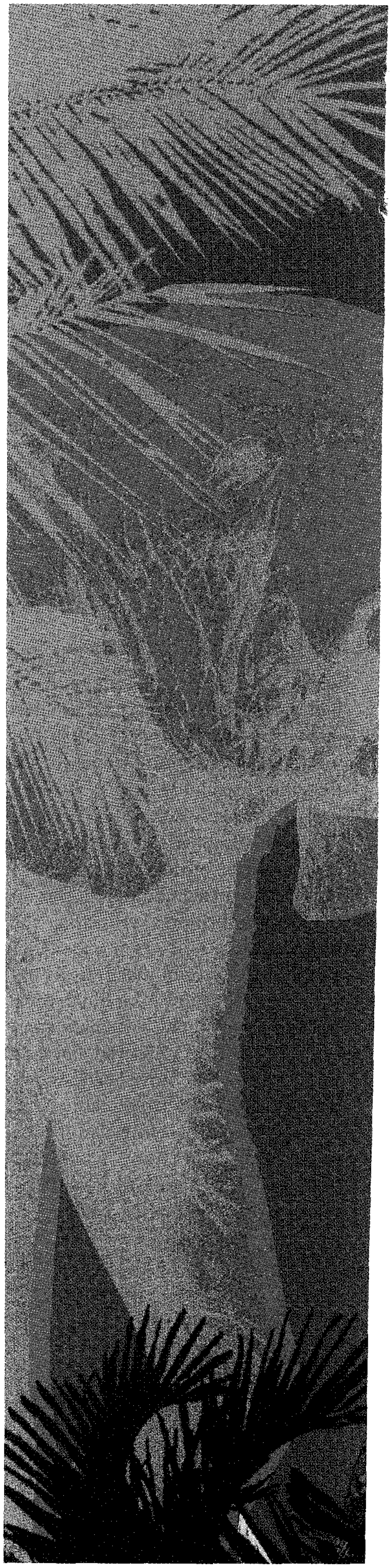
BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

Back in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, Greg Carr made a couple of hundred million dollars developing and marketing voice-mail and Internet services. Carr came from Idaho, and he lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in 1998, just before he turned forty, he decided that he would become a full-time philanthropist. He didn't just want to give his money away; he also wanted to give himself to his projects—body and soul. So, for instance, a few years later, Carr was out walking in Cambridge with a friend, the theatre director and critic Robert Brustein, and they passed an old building that used to house Grendel's bar, on J.F.K. Street, and Brustein said it would be fun to turn that place into a sort of laboratory theatre, and Carr fell in love with the idea. He put more than a million dollars into converting the place into a proper, ninety-nine-seat theatre, and began producing plays. "What I would do is spend all summer in Idaho, a lot of it by myself, with stacks of plays, just reading," he said.

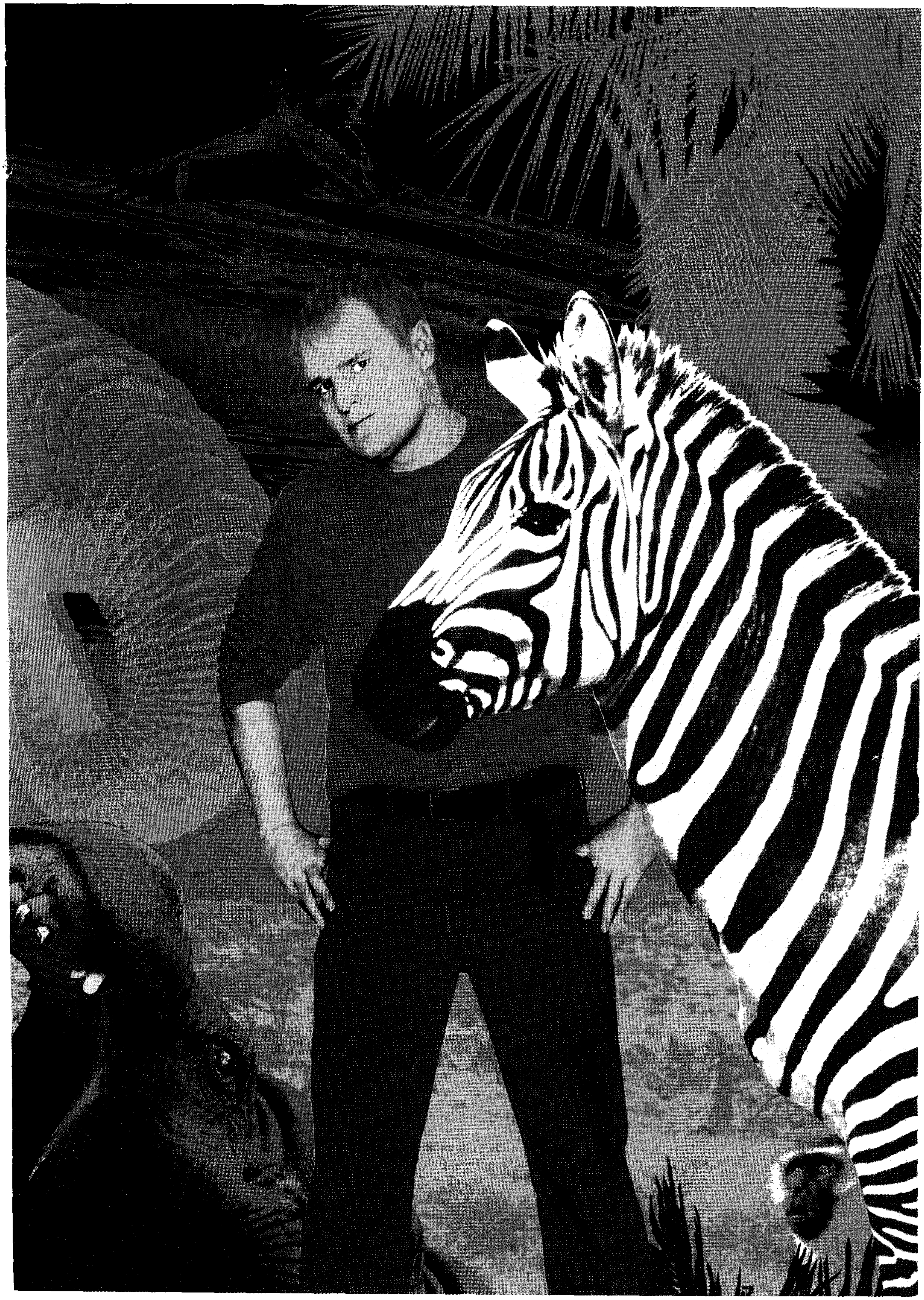
Alongside what he called "new, strange" work, Carr read ancient Greek drama, and he became obsessed with Euripides. In contrast to Aeschylus and Sophocles, whom he saw as paragons of the Athenian establishment—"apologists for the current order"—Euripides, he said, "is writing these plays about slaves, and women taken captive in war, and non-citizens, and crazy people, all the outsiders. And he's writing these plays about—well, what if you were an outsider? What would it be like?" The play that really blew Carr away was "The Bacchae," in which the women of Thebes rebel against the city's Apollonian order (sunshine and rationality) and turn to worshipping Dionysus (night and debauchery). The leader of these women is called Agave, and her son Pentheus is the king of Thebes, and one night, in a Bacchanalian frenzy, the women set upon him, and Agave tears his head off. "And she's holding this bloody head in her hands," Carr told me. "And she kind of looks at him, and she goes, Oh, that's my son. And then she has this moment of recognition, like, Who am I? What have I become? I've been fever-following a god and, um, I don't know who I am anymore. Maybe I've been following the wrong god. What path am I on?"

Carr became obsessed with such moments—the moment when one fever breaks and gives way to a new fever, the moment of self-regard when one calls oneself into question and reverses course. He commissioned a filmmaker, Jessica Yu, to make a documentary about people who experience an "Agave moment"—a terrorist, for instance, and a bank robber, who suddenly saw themselves engaged in action of a kind that they wanted to believe they stood against. In Carr's own life, there was no severed head, no drama worthy of Euripides, but the chapter that was at odds with the way he thinks of himself was, he said, the years he spent as a "crazed businessman"—and after he cashed out he had gone through a long period of not knowing what to do. His theatrical venture, the Market Theatre, belonged to that period. After just two seasons, he shut it down. He had fallen in love with a national park in Africa, which is where we met, a few months ago, and he told me this story.

Gorongosa National Park is a wilderness at the southern tip of the Great Rift Valley, in central Mozambique, and when Carr showed up there, five years ago, it had been all but abandoned to ruin. The park is the size of Rhode Island, and was established in 1960, by Portugal, which had dominated Mozambique for nearly five hundred



Carr's challenge is all-consuming: "I didn't want to be the philanthropist that writes a check and comes back next year and says, What did you do with my money?"

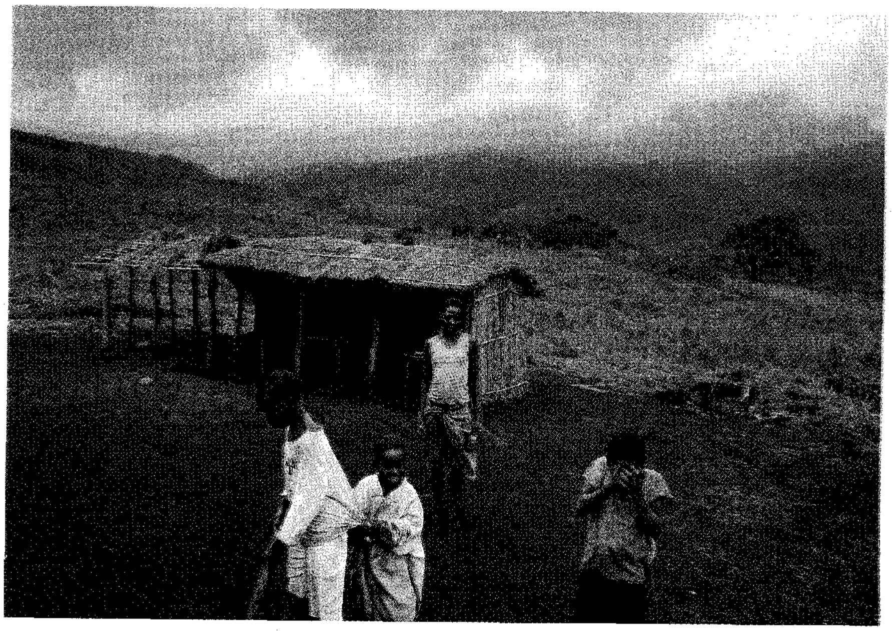


JOHN RITTER

years. For a time, it was one of the top safari parks in Africa: choked with big herds of big game, served by commercial airlines, equipped with a headquarters—Chitengo Camp—that boasted modish accommodations, including a pool, and provided Volkswagen microbuses for exploring the bush. But in 1975 a Marxist liberation movement called FRELIMO drove the Portuguese out of Mozambique, and independence was soon followed by sixteen years of civil war. It was an epoch of appalling national devastation: a million Mozambicans killed, five million driven from their homes, tens of thousands tortured or maimed, the national infrastructure effectively dismantled, the ground sewn with a seeming infinitude of land mines.

Gorongosa District, which includes the park, was the scene of much of the heaviest fighting. Both district and park take their names from Mt. Gorongosa, a six-thousand-foot rain-forested peak that rises fifteen miles west of the park and that served, throughout the civil war, as the military and political stronghold of RENAMO, the anti-FRELIMO insurgency, which was sponsored by the white-supremacist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Gorongosa was a full-tilt battlefield, a zone of terrifying close-range combat, with tank battles and air raids adding to the maelstrom, as towns and villages were repeatedly overrun by one army only to be reclaimed by the other, back and forth, year in and year out.

The war was even more unsparing of the wildlife than it was of people, as soldiers from both sides slaughtered game for food and commerce. When the fighting finally ended, the park was left a no man's land. Local trappers desperate for meat, along with organized and heavily armed poaching syndicates, moved into the breach, and the hunt only accelerated, until the fields shimmered with bleaching bones. Between 1972 and 2001, the number of cape buffalo counted in the park fell from thirteen thousand to just fifteen; the wildebeest count fell from sixty-four hundred to one; hippos went from thirty-five hundred to forty-four; and instead of thirty-three hundred zebras there were twelve. Elephant herds and lion prides, too, were reduced, by eighty to ninety per cent. Of hyenas, black and white rhinos, and wild dogs, there were none.



The ecology of Mt. Gorongosa is changing fast because of slash-and-burn agriculture.

MICHAEL SUBOTZKY/MAGNUM

In 2004, Carr said, you could walk or drive all day without seeing any other living thing but some birds. That was when he committed much of his fortune and much of the rest of his working life to resurrecting the park. Now, when we rode out from Chitengo Camp, we routinely saw lions, elephants, any number of species of antelope (oribi, impala, nyala, eland, sable, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, reedbuck, waterbuck, duiker), and sometimes even the rare buffalo. Vervet and green monkeys popped up here and there. Baboons and warthogs were everywhere. In Lake Urema, pods of hippos milled in the shallows, and shoals of giant crocodiles crowded the muddy banks. Once, I nearly stepped on a spitting cobra, and later I watched a giant monitor lizard lumbering along the edge of a pond. At night, we saw civet cats and water mongoose, and listened to the cries of bush babies against the general clamor of bugs and frogs. The bird life was stupendous. Carr, who has never married and has no children, takes a patriarchal pride in every animal he sees in the park. "You give nature half a chance and it's resilient," he said.

Mozambicans generally express surprise on meeting Greg Carr, because he likes to dress like a bum, and projects none of the grandeur of his wealth. His uniform at Gorongosa is a couple of days' growth of beard, a rumpled short-sleeved shirt or T-shirt, tattered cargo shorts, and Timberland boat shoes with no socks. Carr is happy with the look—it's comfortable, and it's disarming. Although he is not in Gorongosa for profit, he considers giving to be a form of entrepreneurship, and he retains a fast belief that private enterprise is the surest instrument for positive change in the world. His idea in Gorongosa is to use his philanthropy to create the conditions and set the example that will attract for-profit ecotourism businesses to the park, insuring its economic self-sufficiency, and benefitting the impoverished rural communities that surround it. He has already spent more than twenty million dollars on revitalizing the park and its environs, and he expects to spend at least as much again before Gorongosa will no longer need him, which is his definition of success.

So far, Carr's team of a hundred and twenty game scouts has dismantled hundreds of thousands of poachers' snares and gin traps in the park, and confiscated nearly a hundred poachers' guns. As a result, more animals have survived and multiplied, and those animals have grown less chary of human presence. But the scouts keep finding more traps, and making more arrests, and for every poacher they thwart they have to assume that several more are prospering.

The big animals that the park has lost are not only valuable as tourist attractions but essential to sustaining its ecosystem. If grass is not eaten in sufficient quantities, forest encroaches, and the inevitable dry-season fires that flicker across the savannahs and woodlands rage out of control. There were never fewer than half a dozen—and at times there were more than forty—sizable burns going in the park during the two weeks I spent there in the wicked heat (frequently more than a hundred degrees at midday) and desiccation of early October. Similarly, in the wetlands, lakes, and rivers that keep the land alive, hippos are needed to churn the muddy bottom and prevent excessive silting; and they are needed, too, to shit in the water to fertilize the rainy-season floods, which begin in December.

Half the water that flows into Gorongosa National Park comes from the mountain.

So Carr is not just leaving nature to replenish itself. Three years ago, he started bolstering Gorongosa's depleted species with animals donated from parks that can spare them, elsewhere in Mozambique and in South Africa. So far, he has brought in a hundred and eighty wildebeest, a hundred and thirty-nine buffalo, six elephants, and five hippos, and he figures that he needs at least as many more again of these species before the park has the breeding stock it requires. "We're probably twenty thousand bulk grazers short of what we need to keep the grass down," he said.

Carr is particularly keen to get more zebras, but his chief conservationist says that the subspecies that is endemic to the park can be had only in Zimbabwe, and in the current political crisis it's impossible to get them from there. "We're going to have to get the President of this country to call Mugabe," Carr told me. "That's next year's challenge." And he'd like some rhinos. And he wants predators: hyenas, leopards, maybe some more lions. And he wants Africa's top safari-tourism operations to lease concessions—Carr's staff of ecologists, tourism consultants, and engineers have carved Gorongosa into nine huge tracts—and to develop environmentally correct lodges that will generate thirty million dollars a year of business (ten per cent of which will go to the park's budget), in addition to park entry fees. And then there is what Carr calls the "greater Gorongosa ecosystem" to attend to—the ten-kilometre-wide buffer zone around the park, where the species in most immediate need of attention is humankind.

In the buffer zone, upward of thirty per cent of the population is afflicted with AIDS, and most people subsist on less than a dollar a day, with an average life expectancy of between forty and forty-five years. Here Carr has created hundreds of jobs; he has built two schools, and two clinics, and a handful of computer centers; he has had wells drilled. He sends a nurse out from his base, at Chitengo Camp, four days a week to provide basic medical care to nearby villages. He has funded a factory in the regional capital, Vila Gorongosa, where local produce is carefully rendered into fancily packaged dried-fruit snacks. He has sponsored scientific research to develop conservation-minded agricultural practices for the buffer zone, and medical teams to conduct epidemiological studies. He has brought in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to distribute mosquito nets for every one of two hundred and fifty thousand people in and around the buffer zone—the first large-scale attempt to provide universal malaria protection to a population.

In 2007, Carr signed an agreement with the government of Mozambique to oversee the park and to run community and conservation projects in its buffer zone for the next twenty years. He seeks official advice and consent for each move he makes in Gorongosa, but he recognizes that, by giving him charge of the park, the government is basically saying that it recognizes conservation as a necessity that it cannot afford. "I'm not faulting them for this," Carr told me, but he felt the attitude was: "Some dude wants to work on that, let him, because the truth of the matter is, educated Mozambicans, for the most part, want to be in the capital city. The most educated Mozambicans, for the most part, are not clamoring to run a national park."

Carr likes to say that his project is strictly apolitical, but Gorongosa District, where RENAMO sympathies linger, has been largely left behind in Mozambique's postwar recovery, and he understands that his value to the government is not simply as a conservationist. "It wants to show RENAMO it's doing a good thing here," he told me. "Absolutely. And the President's been here three times. He dedicated the school. He dedicated the health clinic. He got his own name on that. I mean, the political aspect of this is key and the economic aspect of it is key." In fact, Carr told me, "I don't think what I do is that different from what the mayor of any small town faces every single day. You're just juggling. O.K., we need better schools, we need a better police department—oh, how's the revenue doing? How are the roads? How's everybody?"

So Carr was excited, a few days after I arrived, in early October, that Mozambique's Minister of the Interior was coming to visit the park, with an eye to becoming a minority partner in one of the tourist concessions. "We gotta knock his socks off," he told Rob Janisch, a South African who runs a tented camp, Explore Gorongosa, which is the first private safari operation to come into the park under Carr's scheme. Janisch suggested that the minister be taken to a watering hole called Paradise Pond. Go and watch elephants drinking, he said, "because (a) it cools you off, and (b) it just is cool."

But Carr didn't want to take any chances: the minister didn't have much time and what if there were no elephants? "Last thing we want is he drives around and says, Oh, I guess they don't have animals yet in Gorongosa." After a minute, he said, "O.K., he lands at Chitengo, we do all our greetings, we put him in the heli, we give him the lake tour, where he will absolutely see tons of stuff, we land near the crossing, because there's a hippo pod there, and because that's where—that's a camp he wants, what we call Dingue Dingue. So we need to show him that and say, This is yours."

An hour later, Carr was clean-shaven, in a gingham dress shirt, fresh chinos, and black loafers. At the approach of the minister's plane, a Land Cruiser was dispatched to run up and down the Chitengo airstrip, broadcasting the hunting calls of hyenas to scare off strolling baboons, warthogs, and antelope. The minister, a young-looking man, was dressed in the same fashion as Carr, with a Leatherman bush knife in a holster on his belt. As he and Carr flew over the park in the chopper, he exclaimed over the landscape—"These palms and acacias, so beautiful"—and he told Carr, "You have really saved lives here." Carr said it was his honor, and the work had given his life meaning. The minister said it was a greater honor for Mozambique "that you leave all the comforts and come here." Carr told him, "I am extremely comfortable sleeping in the bush." The chopper banked over Lake Urema, where pelicans, fish eagles, and yellow-billed storks cruised over hippos and crocs, then out over the grasslands, where big herds of antelope galloped below. Elephants appeared as if on cue. "Paradise," the minister said, and Carr, sitting behind him, nodded avidly, cracked a big sideways grin, and gave a double thumbs up.

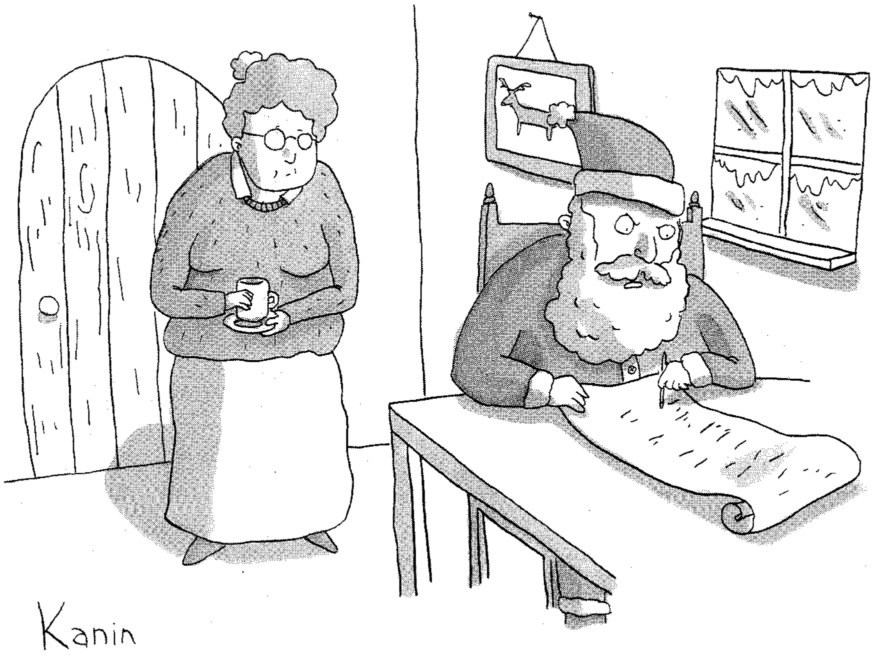
Greg Carr had never been involved in conservation work before he came to Gorongosa. He was not an ecologist, or a zoologist, or even much of an outdoorsman. Nor was he an old Africa hand, much less an economist. His only knowledge of the tourism business was as a customer, and he spoke no Portuguese. For that matter, he had never had a conscious interest in making money before he got around to it. "I was taught at an early age to look for deeper meaning in life," he said.

He was the seventh of seven children, the son of a practicing Mormon and a practicing physician. "The Golden Rule and the Beatitudes and Matthew—great stuff," he said. "And then you'd have Dad pitching in with a little rationalism." He never felt compelled to choose between faith and reason, since both had such obvious appeal and such obvious limitations. In politics, too, he considered himself a centrist. The way he put it was: "Conservatives want to make a good person and liberals want to make a good society. Which of those two do you not want to do?" In college, he thought he might major in biological anthropology—Darwinism, paleontology, primatology—even while he saved up, as a freshman at Utah State University, in Logan, to spend the next two years in Japan as a Mormon missionary.

Carr allows that he made some converts, but, as he tells it, what really excited him in Japan was learning about Zen Buddhism. "I was very much a questioner," he said. And his interests were fluid. When he returned from Japan, he read poetry and majored in history, and had no idea what to do with his life. He applied to graduate school, leaving his options open: Asian studies at Stanford, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, international relations at Yale, or public policy at Princeton. He got in everywhere. The Kennedy School brochure had some stirring lines from J.F.K. about making a better world, so he went there. In his second year at Harvard, he applied to and was accepted in the Ph.D. program in linguistics—"because I wanted to know, Why do we speak? What is a human?"

That was how his mind worked, with an earnest bent toward the forever debatable. So Carr was as surprised as anyone else, during the winter of that year—1985-86—when he developed a sudden and all-consuming conviction that he should be making and selling digital voice-mail systems to telephone companies. "It's a funny thing," he told me. "I just had this idea. I was in my dorm, and I was kind of just looking at my phone, and I was thinking about how little it did, really."

Carr had never studied computer science or telecommunications, let alone business or marketing, but he met an engineer named Scott Jones, at M.I.T., and they started a company called Boston Technology. They maxed out their credit cards buying gadgetry, set up shop in Carr's room, and by summer had a prototype of their product up and running.



"I don't care who's naughty or nice anymore—I only keep track of who's crossed me."

Carr was twenty-six, Jones twenty-five, and three years later they were tycoons.

In 1992, Carr brought in a C.E.O. and became chairman of the board. He had enough money to support forever the life of boyish wonder that had made him the money to begin with—and he still had to figure out what to do with that life. Only now that meant figuring out what to do with the money. He audited classes at Harvard; for three years in a row, he attended a summer course on Homer, Dante, and Joyce's "Ulysses" taught by a professor called Theoharis Theoharis. He read omnivorously and restlessly; he watched movies; he moved into a grand apartment atop the Charles Hotel, in Cambridge—room service suited him—and he suffered from insomnia. He spent most of his time with a friend he met in one of Theoharis's classes, Larry Hardesty, who had moved up to Boston from New Haven as the keyboard player for a rock band that took its name, the Young Man Carbuncular, from a line in "The Waste Land." Carr and Hardesty started a film-production company, Bowerbird Productions, that never produced a film but tried for a time to work with the former Navy Secretary (now Senator) Jim Webb, on an adaptation of his Vietnam novel "Fields of Fire." More successfully, Carr served a stint as publisher (with Hardesty as the managing editor) of a magazine of ideas, *The Boston Book Review*.

It seemed clear to Hardesty that Carr was gratified by his wealth as a measure of achievement, but, he said, "I think he was trying to find something to devote his energy to that would be more satisfying on more levels than success in business had been." Still, in 1996 Carr went back into business, as the chairman of the pioneering global Internet service provider Prodigy. Then, after just two years, he sold his share of the company to the Mexican media mogul Carlos Slim and quit all his other for-profit ventures. That was when he decided to commit himself to a life of philanthropy. In 1998, he gave Harvard eighteen million dollars, to establish the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, at the Kennedy School. In 2000, he co-founded the Museum of Idaho, in Idaho Falls, and created the Market Theatre Company, and the next year he bought the former compound of the Aryan Nations in northern Idaho, which had been confiscated from the Nazi group by court order, and donated the land to a local college as a peace park.

Then a friend introduced him to the Mozambican Ambassador to the United Nations, and the Ambassador invited Carr to come and help his country. At the same time, Carr began spending a lot of time online, reading compulsively about threats to the earth's biodiversity. He was alarmed by the prospect—widely considered likely among environmental scientists—that as many as a quarter of the species now alive will cease to exist by the end of this century. The problem was generally described as a conflict between humanity and the rest of nature. As usual, Carr didn't see how you could win by taking sides; it made more sense to try to remove the conflict, make people and the ecosystems they lived in serve each other better. Thinking like that, he flew into Mozambique, hired a helicopter, and toured the national parks.

He told me that when he came to Gorongosa he knew he'd found his place. Until then, he said, "I'd cast about a lot—yeah, I think it was a hard time—because I wasn't completely fulfilled by any means, and didn't know what was next. I wanted it to be all-engrossing, challenging, and I didn't want to be the philanthropist that writes a check and comes back next year and says, What did you do with my money?" He said, "I mean, I have to actually be pushing against something." He decided to push against extinction.

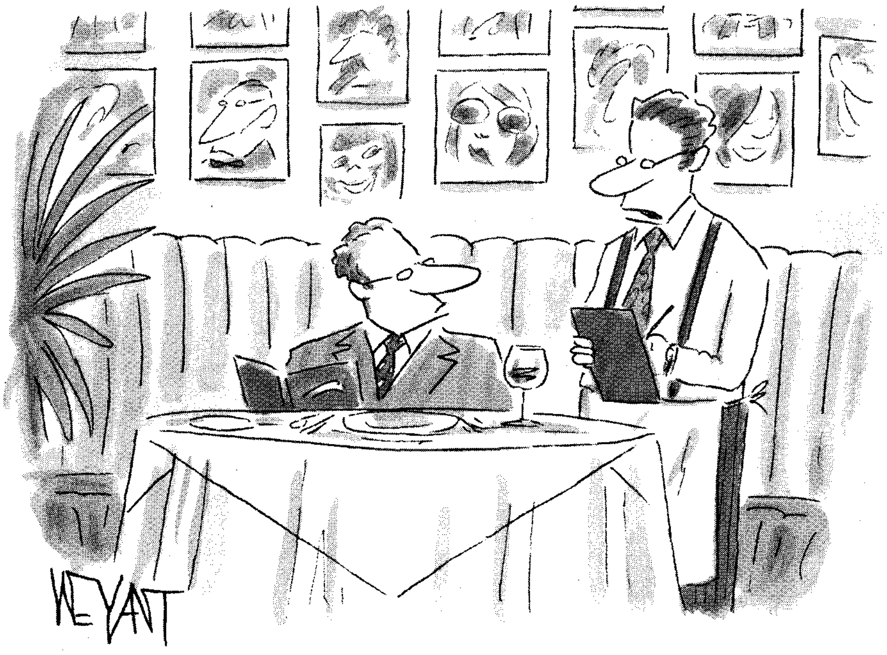
In 1968, the Department of Fauna of the Portuguese government hired a young South African ecologist named Ken Tinley to study wildlife conservation in Gorongosa National Park. In establishing the park, the colonial authorities had driven out the African villagers who had lived there for as long as anyone could remember, and they were prepared to displace more people in the name of preserving the wild land. Tinley had been asked by his Portuguese employers to identify the full parameters of the Gorongosa ecosystem, with the aim of redrawing the park's boundaries accordingly. He picked up his official Land Rover in the Mozambican capital, Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), and with his wife, Lynne, an artist, and their infant son set out for Chitengo. The drive, which can now be done in about eight hours, took them three days, and, once they settled in to their cottage, they stayed for six years, until the liberation war drove them out. Tinley then spent several years writing up his research in a Ph.D. thesis, which runs to nearly five hundred pages and remains one of the most comprehensive analyses of an African ecosystem ever produced.

Tinley sought, to the degree that the technology of the time allowed, to record every aspect of the park's natural order: the flora and fauna, of course, but also the geology, the hydrology, the wind patterns, and the intricate complexity that made all the elements of Gorongosa—every living thing and every physical property—inextricably part of the larger system. What emerges from his technical scientific prose and no end of charts, maps, drawings, and diagrams is an image of the park as one big organism, and of Tinley as its anatomist.

Mia Couto, Mozambique's preëminent novelist and also one of its leading ecologists, told me that Tinley was "a genius," and that view is pretty universal among people with sufficient scientific knowledge to plow through his thesis. For the rest of us, Lynne Tinley wrote a memoir of the family's life in Gorongosa and of the life of the park, a book called "Drawn from the Plains," which distills the essence of her husband's findings, with the artful and honest immediacy of the best nature writing. Here, for instance, is how she describes the annual rainy-season scene when Lake Urema overflows and submerges hundreds of square miles of the surrounding grasslands:

> Thousands of water birds arrive on the plains during the flooding to take advantage of the rich shallow waters. Egret, ibis, spoonbills, herons and divers nest in the tall *Acacia albida* (called winterthorns because they bear leaves in winter and shed them in summer) that hang over the water. The ancient, sleazy-looking Marabou stork in his funereal dress waits in the shallows under the trees for fledglings that fall out of the twig platforms above or for fish dropped by the parents during feeding. Crocodile also gather under the nesting trees to pick up the dropped food and to feed on fish attracted to the water enriched by birds' dung.

Lake Urema's yearly flooding was the engine that sustained the teeming animal life of Gorongosa, and even before he arrived in the park Ken Tinley had surmised from maps that the distant, cloud-shrouded massif of Mt. Gorongosa was,



"Tonight, the part of the sea bass will be played by the chicken."

• •

in turn, the engine of those floods. His research on the mountain confirmed this hypothesis: the mountain was the main water catchment for the park, the source of roughly half the water that flows into it. The primordial forests on the mountain slopes received two and a half times as much rainfall each year as the valley floor, and passed it down through a network of streams and rivers to the lake, providing water essential to human communities on the way. It was obvious to Tinley that the mountain belonged in the park, and, as he studied the opposite side of the park, he concluded that the ancient game-migration routes and wetlands that ran east from the park to the mangrove swamps lining the mouth of the Zambezi River delta where it opens into the Indian Ocean were the final piece to complete the Gorongosa system. In his thesis, which he finished in 1977, Tinley laid out a scheme for such an expansion of the park, indicating, as his wife summarizes it, "how the whole area could be planned, in the simplest possible manner, for tourist viewing, for research and education, for wilderness areas, and for the cropping of game as a source of protein for the surrounding tribal peoples."

By then, of course, Gorongosa was a civil-war battleground and the mountain was RENAMO's. But Tinley's dream of a park that ran "from mountain to mangroves" held fast in the lore of the place, and when Greg Carr came along it quickly captured his fancy.

Like Tinley, Carr is what his former Kennedy School professor Herman (Dutch) Leonard calls a "system thinker." Leonard, who also teaches at the Harvard Business School, had worked with Carr on his voice-mail venture, and he told me, "Greg realized that what Boston Technology was trying to do was to become a component of a much larger system"—the national telephone network—"and that if the company didn't think about the rest of the system, if it just designed its piece, it was unlikely to be able to find space in that larger system." In other words, Leonard said, "to him it wasn't just a product, and you go and sell this product. It was an intervention in a pretty big, complicated game. And he was able to simultaneously be focussed on the individual tree, if you will, and also keep his eye on the forest and think about the nature of how we operate so that we're going to fit in a natural way in this forest." And speaking of trees and forests, Leonard said, "That's not so different from what he's trying to do in Gorongosa."

Indeed, no sooner had Carr grasped the significance of Mt. Gorongosa than he discovered that the rain forest that covered the mountain—simultaneously capturing the water that fell from the clouds and, through evaporation, replenishing it—was being destroyed, piecemeal but steadily, by local practitioners of slash-and-burn agriculture. People had been living in that forest forever: a few thousand people who speak a distinct language, chi-Gorongosi, and adhere to a distinct spiritual order, which holds the mountain to be sacred and its forests to be inhabited by the spirits of their ancestors, who look out for them. But during the civil war other people began arriving on the mountain, followers of RENAMO and displaced people seeking refuge. After the war, more people arrived from the lowlands at the base of the mountain, and began clearing land to grow crops—chopping down old-growth hardwoods, burning them for charcoal, and planting potatoes, or corn, or sometimes marijuana between the stumps. After a few crop cycles, the soil—the accretion of perhaps ten thousand years of compost and sedimentation—was depleted, or after a few rainy seasons it would simply wash away, and these farmers would clear a new patch of forest. The trees they cut did not grow back.

Carr's scientists told him that the mountain's value as a water catchment was in peril: if the killing of trees could not be stopped, the mountain could be lost in just a few years. "To save the park," Carr said, "we have to save the mountain." But he had no authority over the mountain, which stood well outside the buffer zone. It seemed to him that the best solution was Ken Tinley's proposal: to have the mountain, or at least the vital, forested part of it above seven hundred metres, designated a satellite of the park. After all, the rain forest and the high alpine meadows up there were unique in southern Africa; it was the only place in the region where one could find a certain bird—the green-headed oriole—and no doubt countless species of plants. It was a landscape ripe for ecotourism, dotted with clear pools, riven by deep canyons, flanked by waterfalls. Carr and his team worked their government contacts in Maputo, lobbying hard to have the mountaintop added to the park, and at the same time they sought the permission of the traditional leaders of the mountain communities to start conservation programs and lead tours in their jurisdictions.

Most of Gorongosa Park's mountain water comes from two administrative zones, Canda and Sadjunjira. Canda is the turf of a hereditary chief, known by his Portuguese title of *régulo*, and, as Carr paid court to him, he found the Régulo of Canda to be negotiable: if Carr's people hired Canda people to work in Canda, the Régulo didn't mind them running a reforestation program on his side of the mountain, and if they brought tourists to see him, to pay a small visitor's fee and to conduct a ceremony of respect for the ancestors, they could take the tourists there, too. In Sadjunjira, on the other hand, the traditional keeper of the mountain was a kind of shaman, known as the Samatenje, and when Carr paid him a visit everything went wrong.

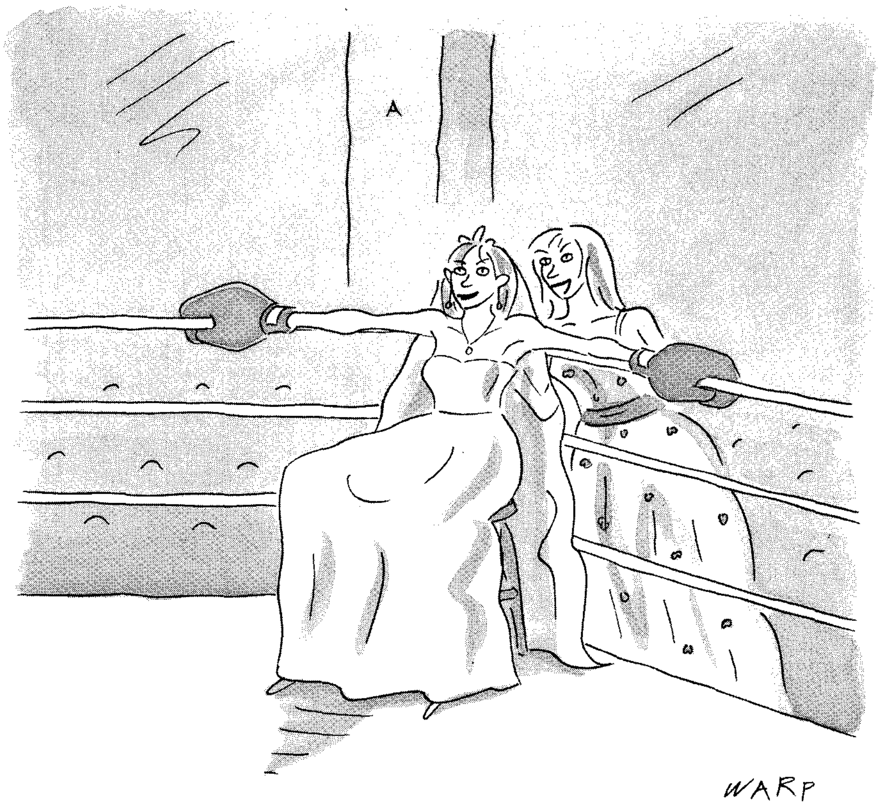
Nobody had told the Samatenje of Sadjunjira that Carr would be arriving by helicopter, a vehicle known to the mountain people chiefly as an instrument of war, and the noise of the thing as it descended near his compound outraged his entourage. What's more, the helicopter was cherry red, and in the Gorongosi culture red is the color of violence and conflict, so it is strictly forbidden to appear before the Samatenje with any trace of red on one's person. Then the helicopter touched down on the wrong side of a stream that demarcated the sacred ground of the Samatenje's domain. And, as the helicopter's doors opened, a truly astonishing thing happened: a pale, snakelike lizard, of a sort that nobody had seen before, popped out of a hole in the ground right beside it—a ghastly omen. The only thing that could be worse was for someone to touch the creature, and so that's what happened: a herpetologically inclined member of Carr's party, delighted by what he recognized to be his first ever sighting of a blind skink, snatched it up to have a closer look. All the Samatenje could say was: Get out of here—go!

"Look," Carr said, when I asked him about that visit. "Everybody is always talking about wanting to save a rain forest. I'm actually trying to do it—trying to see what it takes. And I'm finding out."

Carr spends as much as half of each year in Mozambique these days, and the rest of his time in America, where he lives in baronial luxury. He loves his big homes, but in Gorongosa, at Chitengo, he loves an equal and opposite extreme of sparse accommodation. For his first few years there, he slept mostly in a tent and sometimes in the back of a truck. He didn't even bother with mosquito netting, an adventure that resulted in more than one case of malaria. Since Chitengo was rehabilitated, two years ago, Carr has taken to staying in one of the tourist bungalows, but when those beds are fully booked—a situation that pleases him—he crashes on a mattress on an office floor. On one such night, as he headed off to sleep, he said, "You've seen my houses. One of the things I've really gotten out of being here is discovering that this is all I need." I pointed out that he had a million acres of game park, a fleet of trucks, a staff of hundreds, and a hotel and restaurant at his command. "Yeah," he said. "But seriously—it's like an eight-year-old boy's dream come true."

The one luxury Carr does allow himself in Gorongosa is to keep a chartered helicopter (a blue one now) on standby—another eight-year-old's dream, but a supremely practical one, as I understood when Carr took me in it to see the mountain. The Chitengo restaurant was full of tourists that morning, and all of them had been happy with the game drives they'd been on. "We've got a tourism product, we're ready for safaris," Carr told me before takeoff. "I can see that happening now. So I can turn my mind to the next big thing—like expanding the park." Two years ago, just before Carr signed his twenty-year agreement with the government, the mountaintop above seven hundred metres had been added to the park's buffer zone. Carr was still eager to have it brought fully into the park. But RENAMO remained a force on the mountain, and nobody in Maputo wanted to rile up the old guerrillas by appearing to take their turf out from under them.

The helicopter touched down briefly in Vila Gorongosa to pick up the head of Carr's forestry team, Regina Cruz. Our next stop was on the mountain, in a patch of tall grass beside the forested banks of a river, where we continued on foot, climbing through reeds and high grass into the sudden damp, dark cool of forest until we came out on a broad slab of rock at the base of a three-hundred-foot waterfall called Murombodze Falls. It was months since the last heavy rains had replenished the land, and, even so, the falls were spectacular—shelf upon shelf of interweaving cascades roaring into a deep, clear pool. "This is a key tourist point," Carr announced. "There are waterfalls all over this mountain. A hiker could spend three



"Hang in there. If you win this bout, you get to fight his mother."

or four days hut-hopping here." As with the park, Carr envisioned such tourism paying for the conservation of the mountain. "The thing I never stop marvelling over in Africa is the economic scale," he said. "While on Wall Street a couple-billion-dollar merger goes down and no one really bats an eye, you can make a fifty-thousand-dollar business on this mountain and save an entire ecosystem."

In fact, Carr was spending a hundred and sixty thousand dollars a year for Cruz to run sixteen nurseries on the mountain—each of which produces, from locally gathered seed, fifteen hundred saplings a year, which she and her team plant in denuded areas—and the ecosystem was far from saved. Near the foot of the falls, Cruz showed us one of her nurseries, a simple bamboo shed, where her seedlings were barely six inches tall, and right out in front of it we encountered a lively older woman whom Cruz recognized as an avid illegal tree cutter. "She's been warned, but keeps at it," Cruz said, and Carr said, "So bring the police." Cruz said that the previous week the police had come to arrest two illegal cutters, but she would rather see conservation-education programs on the mountain than cops. "We have to teach the people, because they grow up with nature and they do not understand that one day the trees can disappear," she said. "They say to me, 'The trees come from God.' I say, 'O.K., so if God put it and you take it we all have to put God's trees back.' They laugh, but maybe they start to understand."

The question of whether to use persuasion or coercion to save the mountain divides Carr's staff sharply. Franziska Steinbruch, the park's manager of science, told me that she had been studying the deforestation of the Gorongosa water catchment in satellite photographs, taken annually since 1972, and that the damage had been increasing exponentially. Her attitude was: the law is the law, no excuses, and the government has to uphold it to defend the rain forest. "If that's not coming as a force from the top, the forest will be gone in two years maximum," she said, and she added, "I'm actually losing hope."

Carr himself takes a hard line when he talks about the mountain, but, as we returned from the falls to the helicopter, we found a young man waiting for us, whom Cruz identified as another illegal tree cutter. He wore a ragged shirt, decorated with images of subway stations in Brooklyn, and he bowed his head coyly as Carr lectured him about leaving the trees alone. Then the young man asked for money to buy salt. Carr's anger evaporated. "It's all about poverty," he said, and he told Cruz, "The next time you hire people to work in your nurseries, you should hire this guy—that's a twofer, one less tree cutter and one more tree planter."

From the helicopter, it was easy to see what the worry was. Terrain that appeared from a distance, or even from a slight angle, to be a dense tangle of unbroken rain forest looked from directly overhead like moth-eaten fabric, where small and medium-sized clearings opened up to reveal a field of charred tree stumps, interspersed with crops or, at least as often, simply abandoned.

"We need Regina to have a hundred nurseries," Carr had said when we took off. "Because we can do it. We've proved the concept." But as we buzzed over smoldering fires in fresh cuts, and fields of rocks laid bare by the washing away of topsoil, he said, "Another hundred nurseries—that's not enough." To be sure, large swaths of the forest stood solid and inviolate, but these areas only made the despoliation elsewhere more obvious. The damage ran all the way to the cloud-shrouded summit, a wild place of craggy rock pillars and low, tangled vegetation, and as we crossed from Canda to the Sadjunjira side the trashing of the forest only got worse.

On several nights at Chitengo, we had watched Ken Burns's recent documentary mini-series on the history of America's national parks. After the screening of one episode, a visiting safari guide said, "It's interesting seeing those American national parks—how they were set aside in the name of the many for the many. Here it's really the national land being set aside in the name of the people for the very few, to be honest. The masses here aren't going to come see these animals, because really they're afraid of them, and they'd rather have the land to farm." But, the guide said, the land would be useless without the mountain to feed it. So, he said of the park, "why save all this land for a couple of thousand whities if it's just going to disappear? That's why, if you ask Greg, he'll tell you the mountain is the first priority."

Carr rarely expresses discouragement directly; instead, he betrays the feeling by proposing ever more extravagant solutions to the dilemma that's bothering him. By the end of our helicopter survey of the mountain, he had begun talking about planting "enormous avocado orchards" at the foot of the mountain to lure the tree cutters down from their backbreaking assault on the forest. But Cruz didn't see any reason to believe that people wanted to abandon the mountain.

"They say, 'No—it's the white people coming to take our land,'" she said. "'Where will we go? Where will we live? What will we eat?'"

"We'll give them jobs," Carr said. "We can give a lot of them jobs."

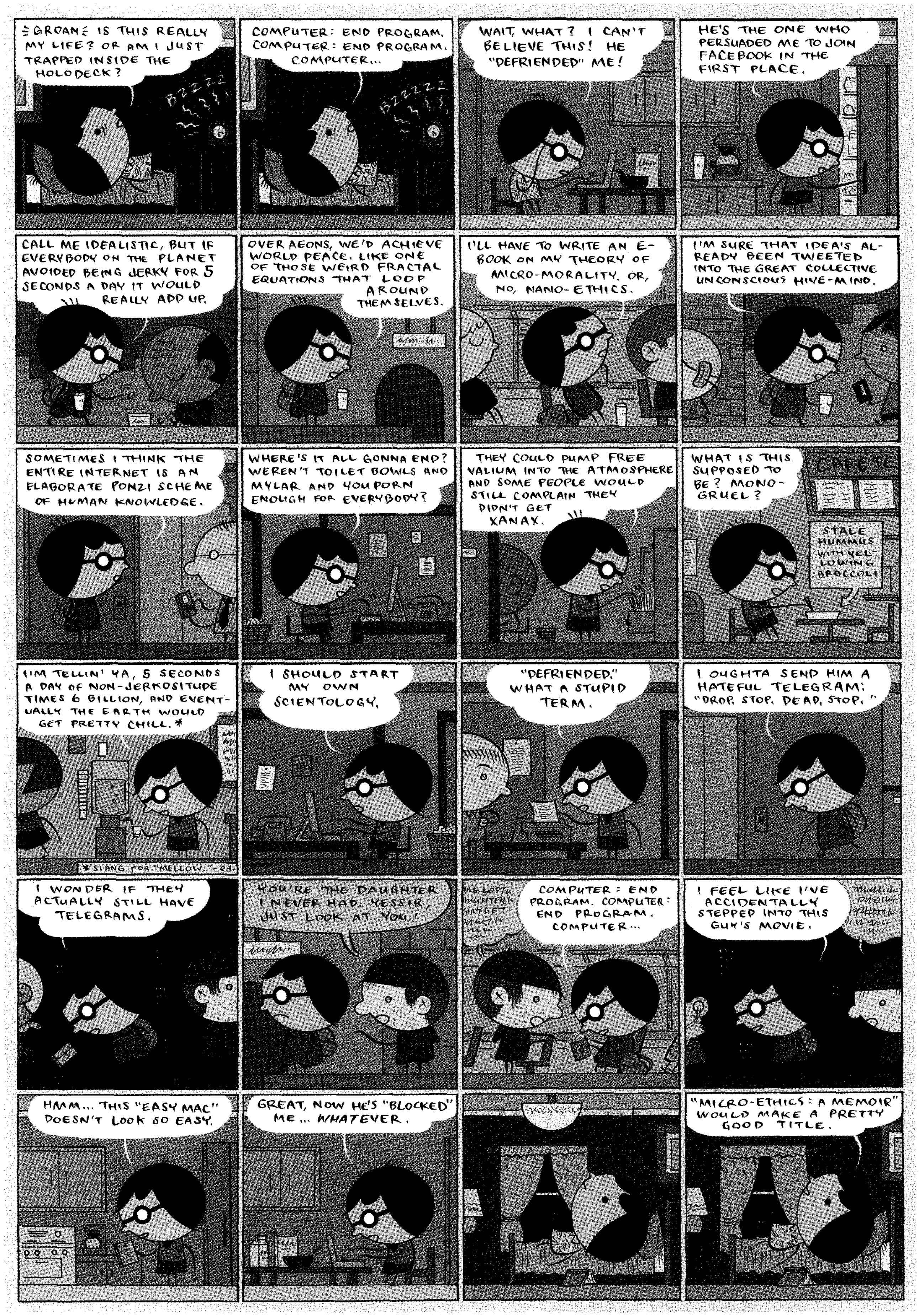
Cruz remained unconvinced. She had no difficulty expressing her discouragement. When we landed back in Vila Gorongosa to drop her off, she told Carr, "I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. Really, I never realized that the situation was as bad as that. It's really worse this year."

"We can fight it," Carr told her.

"Yeah," she said. "Maybe."

The mountain was a problem. "It has to be a national park above seven hundred metres," Carr told me. "We have to get to the point where you don't live up there." He said as much on nearly every day of my stay. And nearly every day he flew one or another important visitor over the mountain to make his case. Carr was in the process of trying to sign up the first three safari-lodge operators to run concessions in the park, and he wanted them to understand, as well, the potential value that the mountain could add to Gorongosa tourism. He was encouraged that the Minister of the Interior had described the harm to the mountain as "an environmental catastrophe." But Carr placed his highest hopes for the mountain in a South African named Dave Law, whose company, Barra Resorts, runs a string of Indian Ocean lodges in Mozambique. Carr wanted Law to build a lodge at Murombodze Falls, and when he took Law to see the spot, he invited a young woman, a Portuguese graduate student who was doing research in the park, to ride along in the helicopter and to visit the swimming hole beneath the spilling water. "A girl in a bikini—who doesn't like that?" he said. Law loved the falls; he loved the whole mountain. Over drinks

SKETCHBOOK BY IVAN BRUNETTI


≋GROAN≋ IS THIS REALLY MY LIFE? OR AM I JUST TRAPPED INSIDE THE HOLODECK?
BZZZZZ
COMPUTER: END PROGRAM. COMPUTER: END PROGRAM. COMPUTER...
BZZZZZ
WAIT, WHAT? I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS! HE "DEFRIENDED" ME!
HE'S THE ONE WHO PERSUADED ME TO JOIN FACEBOOK IN THE FIRST PLACE.
CALL ME IDEALISTIC, BUT IF EVERYBODY ON THE PLANET AVOIDED BEING JERKY FOR 5 SECONDS A DAY IT WOULD REALLY ADD UP.
OVER AEONS, WE'D ACHIEVE WORLD PEACE. LIKE ONE OF THOSE WEIRD FRACTAL EQUATIONS THAT LOOP AROUND THEMSELVES.
I'LL HAVE TO WRITE AN E-BOOK ON MY THEORY OF MICRO-MORALITY. OR, NO, NANO-ETHICS.
I'M SURE THAT IDEA'S ALREADY BEEN TWEETED INTO THE GREAT COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS HIVE-MIND.
SOMETIMES I THINK THE ENTIRE INTERNET IS AN ELABORATE PONZI SCHEME OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.
WHERE'S IT ALL GONNA END? WEREN'T TOILET BOWLS AND MYLAR AND YOUPORN ENOUGH FOR EVERYBODY?
THEY COULD PUMP FREE VALIUM INTO THE ATMOSPHERE AND SOME PEOPLE WOULD STILL COMPLAIN THEY DIDN'T GET XANAX.
WHAT IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE? MONO-GRUEL?
CAFETE
STALE HUMMUS WITH YELLOWING BROCCOLI
I'M TELLIN' YA, 5 SECONDS A DAY OF NON-JERKOSITUDE TIMES 6 BILLION, AND EVENTUALLY THE EARTH WOULD GET PRETTY CHILL.*
* SLANG FOR "MELLOW." -Ed.
I SHOULD START MY OWN SCIENTOLOGY.
"DEFRIENDED." WHAT A STUPID TERM.
I OUGHTA SEND HIM A HATEFUL TELEGRAM: "DROP. STOP. DEAD. STOP."
I WONDER IF THEY ACTUALLY STILL HAVE TELEGRAMS.
YOU'RE THE DAUGHTER I NEVER HAD. YESSIR, JUST LOOK AT YOU!
COMPUTER: END PROGRAM. COMPUTER: END PROGRAM. COMPUTER...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE ACCIDENTALLY STEPPED INTO THIS GUY'S MOVIE.
HMM... THIS "EASY MAC" DOESN'T LOOK SO EASY.
GREAT, NOW HE'S "BLOCKED" ME... WHATEVER.
"MICRO-ETHICS: A MEMOIR" WOULD MAKE A PRETTY GOOD TITLE.

on the evening after his visit, he spoke of running horseback trips over the summit, of stringing zip lines through the rainforest canopy, of building a spa that looked out from his lodge onto the falls.

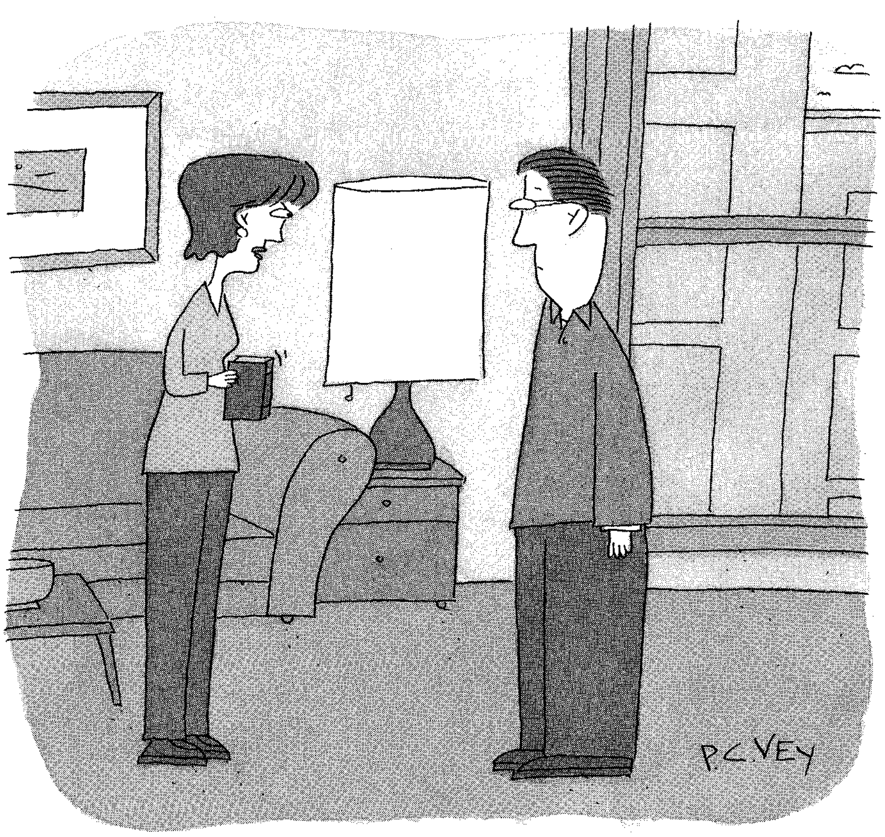
It sounded nice. But, while Law and Carr were up on the mountain, I had paid a visit to Eugénio Almeida, the Régulo of Canda, and he had told me that although he wanted more tourists to visit the waterfall, he didn't want anybody going there, or even taking pictures of it, without first coming to see him at his compound to pay a fee, have a certificate stamped, and conduct a ceremony in honor of a spirit whom he called the Owner. Never mind that the Régulo's compound lay nearly two hours' drive away from the falls: the same went for the rest of the mountain, he said. "No one should go on the mountain without my consent—I, the Régulo," he said. He was particularly concerned about anyone tampering with the waterfall. "It is a holy place," he said. "Long ago, no one lived very close to that place. In the evening, the Owner would move around the place. Even here we would hear him walking. He made a lot of noise. And he climbed from the waterfall high up in the mountain. Now many people have built their houses around the waterfall. By settling their houses around the waterfall, these people closed the way the Owner would use. He doesn't have any path to move from the waterfall into the mountain."

The Régulo, a slender man in his sixties, wore an orange polo shirt and shimmering green trousers, and periodically he tapped a bit of snuff from a plastic vial into his palm, then raised it carefully to his nose and snorted it. "Long ago, things weren't like this chaos we experience these days," he said. The Régulo wanted his office to be respected. The problem, he said, was that there were too many people trying to lead the community. "Everyone leads and no one listens to the other," he told me. He blamed the war. If there was lawlessness and destruction on the mountain, it was because people had been addled by what he called "the gun effects." I took that to mean shell shock. "These people inhaled a lot of gunpowder from guns and bombs during the war," he said. "This gunpowder affected people's brains, and mixed them up. Good sense was replaced by war-related ideas."

He told me that Greg Carr was his friend—"We are like brothers"—and that the people of Canda were dependent on the Carr Foundation for jobs. In fact, he said, the thirty-six people whom Regina Cruz employed on her forestry team were the only people in all of Canda, an area of some four hundred square miles, who had regular salaried jobs. The rest lived by the hoe; they were subsistence farmers. "Here, in my area, people suffer a lot," he said. So they were also grateful to Carr for building them a school. But none of that made them ready to accept the upper mountain's being turned into a park.

In colonial times, the Régulo reminded me, many people had lived in the area that is now the park, and when it became the park the Portuguese burned their homes and scattered them. These were the associations that the word "park" carried, he said. In fact, a number of people had resettled in the park during and after the civil war, and Carr was now working on getting them out. He has budgeted a million dollars to resettle some seventy families from the shores of Lake Urema, and he said that there would be no coercion, only enticement: better homes, better social services, better economic opportunities. The Régulo saw it differently. He thought it was bad enough that locals could no longer hunt for meat in the buffer zone, as everyone used to do in the past. "Now you claim all that area to be yours," he told me. By "you" he meant the *muzungu*—the white man. He explained, "*Muzungu* means tomorrow he cheats us and then he takes our property."

The Régulo said that park workers had held a meeting at his house "to persuade people to leave the top of the mountain." When the people up the mountain heard that, he said, they came and protested in his yard. Three times, they came—two hundred people, then ninety people, then seventy-five people. "All of them refused to leave those areas on top of the mountain where they live," he said. These "complainers," as he called them, had even accused the Régulo personally of selling out to the park, and he didn't like that. He told me that Mozambique's land law was clear, and everyone knew that it said people cannot be removed from where they live—they have to agree to move voluntarily. "This was the only disagreement we have ever had with Mr. Greg Carr," he said, and he added, "We don't want foreigners to control our area. We want to control our land ourselves." He took credit for the recent arrests of illegal tree cutters. "The two men were beaten, then jailed,"



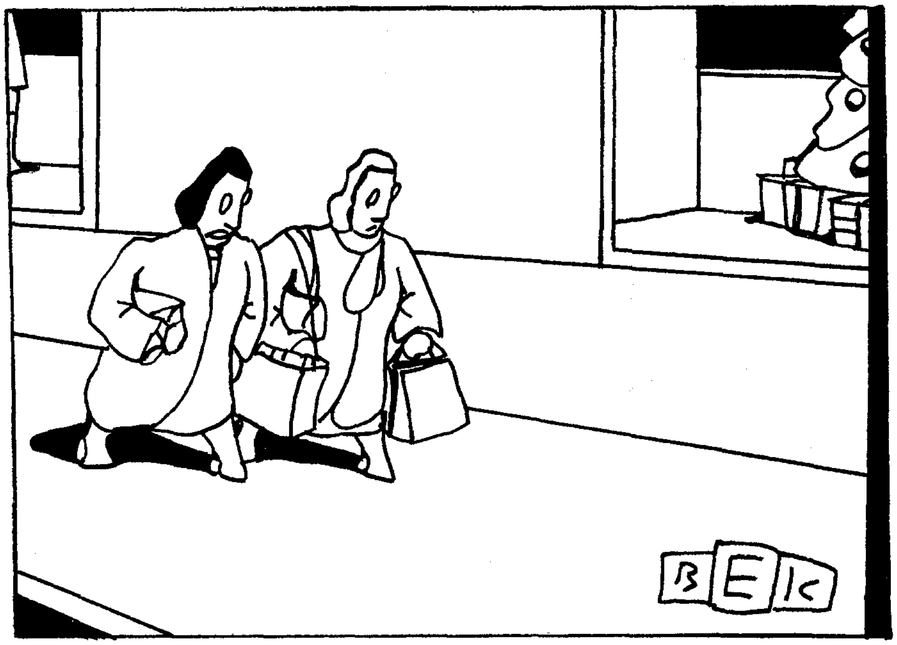
"You've just been copying things from my sex diary into your sex diary."

the Régulo told me. After all, he said, "we know that this mountain and its trees attract rain. You see, rain is becoming scarce now, and later no rain will fall at all."

Carr, however, said it was untrue that anybody from his project had told people on the mountain that they would have to move: that was not his policy, and it never would be. In fact, he said, he had insisted, in his agreement with the government, that "traditional people" be allowed to dwell in the park, and he told me that that would apply to the mountain, too, if it was given park status. He placed the blame for the Régulo's troubles on agents provocateurs from RENAMO, who had gone around accusing him of being a rich American *muzungu* land grabber, in order to make some political hay at a time of municipal elections in the Gorongosa District two years ago. I heard the same thing from people in Maputo who had nothing to do with Carr's project, and Carr provided me with a local newspaper clipping describing the smear campaign.

Carr was much more interested to hear that the Régulo had said he wanted to see more tourists on the mountain, and to control deforestation. The logistical details didn't trouble him. "Basically, what you do is, you introduce Dave Law to Eugénio the Chief, and they sort it out," Carr said. "Eugénio wants jobs and he wants tourism money, and Dave Law wants the same thing." Frequently, when Carr sought to explain his mission, he would recite facts and figures about the global threat to biodiversity and about the glorious past of the Gorongosa ecosystem. But when he talked about the how, rather than the why, he could sound more like a ward heeler. He said, "Economics will solve the problem faster than any public policy." He said, "Every private-sector entrepreneur has this incredible bias toward letting enlightened self-interest pull things forward, and I fully believe that will happen." And he said, "It's all about jobs. It's all about jobs. It's all about jobs."

Carr's disarming faith in the power of his own good intentions to render confrontation insignificant has served him well in Mozambique. Following his initial catastrophic red-helicopter-and-blind-skink encounter with the Samatenje of Sadjunjira, Carr issued the shaman an invitation to visit Chitengo, gave him a grand welcome and free use of the bar, and sent him home a buddy. In fact, he posted a photograph of the two of them together as his head shot on his Facebook page. The Samatenje, however, had never come around to coöperating with the Gorongosa team, so I went to see him, too.



"This year, we just decided to give money to ourselves."

Unlike the Régulo of Canda, the Samatenje of Sadjunjira lived well up the mountain, far from the last paved road, a four-and-a-half-hour journey from Chitengo. Along the way I learned from Inácio Júlio Tomás, a member of the Gorongosa forestry crew, who had agreed to drive and translate for me, that the Samatenje I thought I was going to meet—the Facebook Samatenje—had died in the past year, and that I was going to meet the new Samatenje, his brother. Tomás wanted me to comprehend the incredible powers that this new Samatenje and his other brother, the witch doctor of Sadjunjira, were believed to possess. There was even a local legend, he said, that the brothers had killed the Facebook Samatenje, by working some fratricidal magic on him. It sounded far-fetched to me, and Tomás allowed that the dead Samatenje had spent a lot of time drinking at the tavern in Vila Gorongosa, and fooling around with the ladies there, which was a more routine cause of death in the area. "But people here don't believe in AIDS," he told me, and Tomás himself was not prepared to discount the powers of the two surviving brothers: their father, he said, had had awesome powers.

Not long ago, Tomás had had recourse to a witch doctor on account of a lame foot. He still wore the dark-green fetish thread the healer had fitted his ankle with as he cast his spells, and Tomás had no complaints about the treatment: he had been up and walking again in no time. It seemed everyone had such stories, even the science-minded. Carr told me that every year, at the end of the flood season, in mid-April, Gorongosa Park officially reopens, and all the local shamans convene under a hallowed "miracle tree" at Chitengo to call on the park's lions to show their favor to the park. Lo and behold, after one such ceremony Carr saw a lion stroll by the Chitengo restaurant—an unheard-of sighting in the fenced compound—and he found that five more lions had gathered by the camp gate.

The day before my trip to Sadjunjira, I had made another long drive to visit a network of underground bat caves that were known to be guarded by spirits, one of whom took the form of a leopard. Shortly before we reached our destination, my guide had stopped so that we could stretch our legs and eat a sandwich. It was a stupefyingly hot, still day, but, as

Nighty-night, kiddo.
Shanahan

EDDIE (THE SANDMAN) FASOLINO

we stood with our lunch by the tailgate of the car, the trees around us began to rattle in a burst of extreme wind that gathered suddenly into a slender twister, blackened with dust, and ripped between us, snatching a sandwich wrapper, which sailed a good seventy feet into the air and was gone forever. Later, in the caves, I stood on a ledge overlooking a deep black pool of water and a snake rose to the surface—some kind of cobra, at least five feet long—and stared straight at me until I turned away and it sank from sight. My guide had no doubt that both twister and snake were visitations. But, as Tomás regaled me with similar stories of the powers of the Samatenje and his brother—the brother, he said, was a very good doctor, who could give you medicine that would make you so rich that "you'll go to America and buy a helicopter"—he mentioned in passing that the Samatenje had nevertheless lost two children the year before to cholera, by modern medical standards one of the most preventable, and treatable, maladies.

After leaving the last graded road on the way to Sadjunjira, we spent the next hour climbing the mountain in four-wheel drive on a road that was properly a footpath, and a badly washed-out one, too. On either side, large patches of the mountain were stripped bare of trees, and ragged fringes of flame licked up the grassy slopes. Then for long stretches there was no grass to burn: the topsoil was entirely gone, and all that remained was a waste of boulder fields. The last few miles of our approach was made on foot, and for the final hundred yards we had to remove our shoes and socks, as we had entered hallowed ground.

Tomás had been anxious that we were arriving around noon, for fear that we might not find the Samatenje at home or sober so late in the day. But he was both—a slight, bearded man, clad in the ragged remains of several denim shirts and matching pants. He squatted at the sight of us, cupped his hands, and clapped them rhythmically—*pock, pock, pock, pock, pock, pock, pock*—finishing with a half-beat flourish. This was a ritual that he repeated frequently throughout our visit, and which we returned in kind each time. He gave us straw mats to sit on in the shade of a vast, fruit-laden mango tree, and left us there for well over an hour before he commenced our audience. By then, he had assembled an entourage of local elders to join us—because, Tomás explained, such a leader cannot meet alone with a white man lest he later be accused of having betrayed the interests of his community.

Throughout our visit, fires crackled through the surrounding bush, and fine ribbons of sooty ash drifted down around us. A steep flank of the mountain rose behind the Samatenje, bare and burning, and I asked him if it had been forest when he was a boy. He said, "Now it's worse, because people are destroying and cutting the trees." The ancestors felt the same way, he said: "They feel that something's going wrong. They're warning the people, but the people don't take care."

So would it be a good idea to plant new trees?

"No," the Samatenje said.

Why?

"Tradition."

What about jobs?

"No."

So no more trees?

"The trees will grow themselves."

What if the police come and arrest tree cutters?

"No problem."

What if tourists come?

"No."

That was what the Samatenje had to say. His power, it seemed, lay entirely in refusal. There was more clapping: *pock, pock, pock, pock.* Then we left. As soon as we were outside the shaman's sanctuary, and had put our shoes back on, Tomás, who had spoken so admiringly of traditional ways on the journey in, erupted in a tirade against the Samatenje's stonewalling of the modern world: his people needed trees, his people needed jobs—to deprive his people of trees and jobs was murder! "They're killing a lot of people," Tomás said.

Back at Chitengo, I found Carr drinking gin-and-tonics with a new group of safari operators. "I don't think I would ever sort out the micropolitics—or that it really needs it," he told me when I described my excursion, and he said, "I see it more as just a we-give-them-opportunity, we-give-them-jobs, we-may-end-up-saving-Canda-and-losing-Sadjunjira sort of thing." It was the closest I ever heard him come to resignation.

The novelist Mia Couto told me a story, when we met in Maputo. During Mozambique's first national elections, in 1994, he attended a campaign rally in a small village, where a politician from the city gave a speech. The politician said, "I'm here to save you, and we will bring hospitals, schools"—the usual boilerplate. When he got to the end of it, a villager stood up and said, "We are very happy, very touched, because you came from so far away to save us, and that reminds me of the story of the monkey and the fish." The villager didn't say anything more, and Couto realized that he and the politician were the only people there who didn't know the story. Finally, the politician confessed his ignorance, so the man told him the story, and it went like this: A monkey was walking along a river, and saw a fish in it. The monkey said, Look, that animal is under water, he'll drown, I'll save him. He snatched up the fish, and in his hand the fish started to struggle. And the monkey said, Look how happy he is. Of course, the fish died, and the monkey said, Oh, what a pity, if I had only come sooner I would have saved this guy.

"Anyway," Couto said, "this is the traditional point of view. But you cannot just say, This is wonderful and don't touch it. Because it is being touched. You can't avoid bringing modernity. It's happening."

He was right that the story took the fish's point of view. But, I wondered, how could it be told to make the monkey look good? I got my answer, the next day, when I met Terezinha da Silva, who runs a women's-rights organization in Maputo. Nine years ago, da Silva was a fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, at Harvard, and later, when Carr told her that he was going to invest in Gorongosa Park, she said, she urged him to please be sensitive to the rights of the peasants. But this past summer she went to Gorongosa District to lead seminars, and she had to call into question all her assumptions about the sanctity of traditional culture. "I was so shocked and depressed with what I heard during the course," she told me. Specifically, she was appalled to hear about a practice that was called "early marriage," but which she properly called "forced unions": impoverished parents in remote rural areas would give their five- or six- or seven-year-old daughters to middle-aged men in exchange for a monthly stipend. She said that she was told of schools that had no girls at all, because they were all married. Mozambique had good laws against such things, but they were often not enforced, out of respect for culture and tradition. And the thing was, da Silva said, she later learned that in the past, in these same areas, the cultural tradition was for women not to marry until eighteen.

The traditional position—the fish's position—was: Don't save us from ourselves. But what if the tradition itself was corrupt, or if the culture had already been lost? Carlos Pereira, Carr's director of conservation in the park, said of Gorongosa District, "This is a terrible place, psychologically. To keep alive, in the morning they had to help RENAMO, in the afternoon they had to help FRELIMO. That was every day. Now, imagine this person that had to collaborate with one side and the other side. What does he do in life? That's what he tries to do in life. He says yes on this side, but says yes on that side. He goes in the middle, talks a lot, says nothing. You can never be entirely loyal, you never entirely trust."

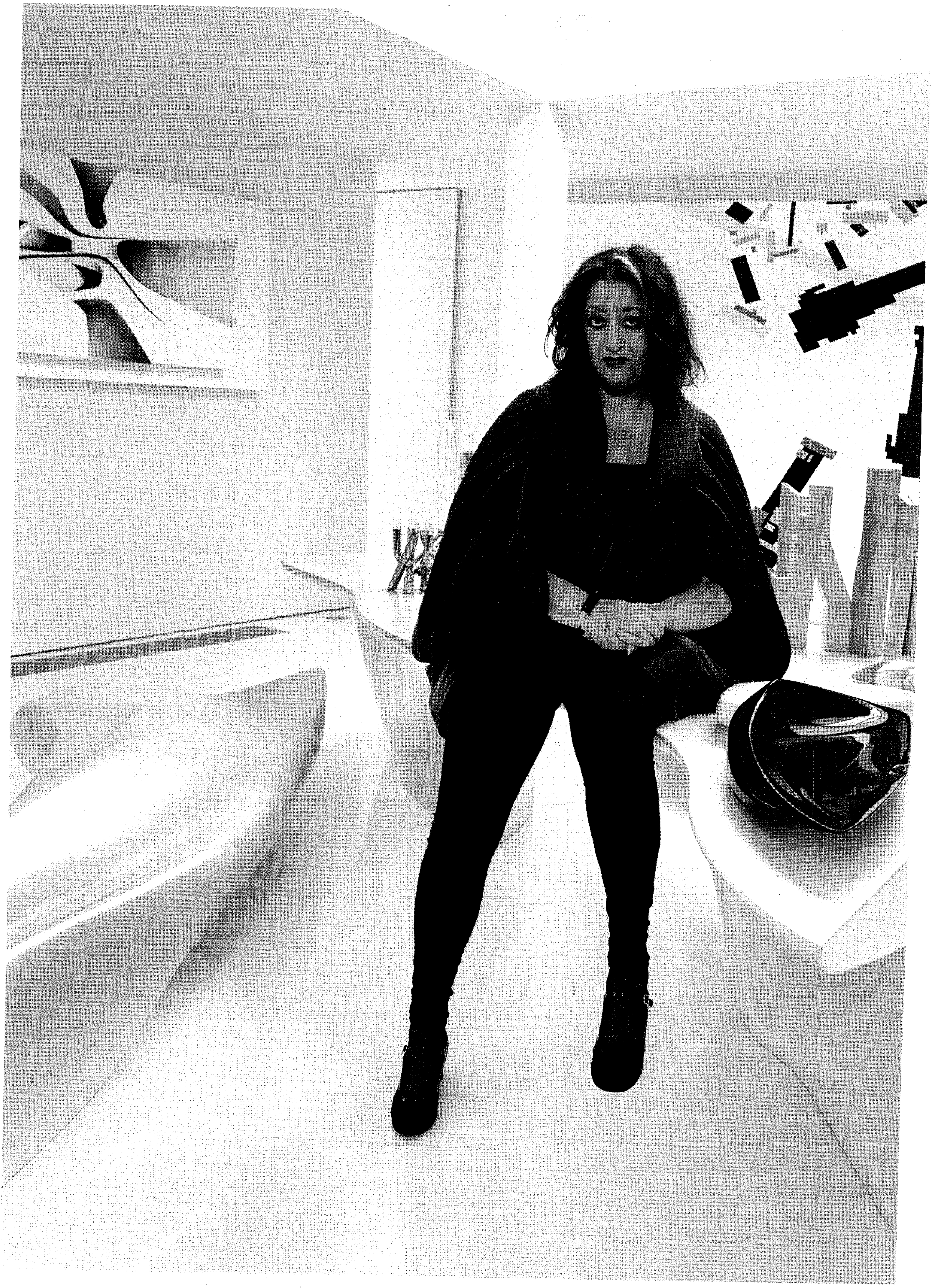
"So what are my choices?" Greg Carr said. "Absolutely do nothing, never go anywhere near the mountain in twenty years? O.K., fine, what do you have then? A bare stripped mountain washed away. We lose half of the perennial water system of the park. But I respected them and didn't go there, because there's old RENAMO-FRELIMO wounds and old colonial wounds, so I didn't go there. O.K., so that's Plan A. That's just really bold on my part. What's Plan B? Go there and start talking to them. Gosh, can we put up some nurseries? O.K., let's do it. Gosh, can we do tourism? No, we don't want you on the Sadjunjira side doing tourism. O.K., we won't. What else am I supposed to do?"

After all, he said, "that Gorongosi culture is gone when the last tree gets cut down up there. And, furthermore, you've got people up there—the kids don't have schools, the women are basically slaves, and the Régulos are not looking out for their people a lot of the time. We all know that traditional societies look out for themselves. What are my choices? I'm a human-rights guy and a conservation guy trying to do both at the same time. The best idea I've come up with is those nurseries. I like it, I think it was a good thing, I'm proud of myself and my team for doing it."

Carr hasn't given up hope that the mountain will become part of the park, but he told me recently that it might be just as well if the mountain were designated a "forest reserve"—a status that insures higher conservation status but makes greater allowances for human habitation. "That's a change in tactic, not a change in goal," he said, and he added, "But if 'forest reserve' is still so politically sensitive, look, I can keep my goal and continue to change my tactics." At the same time, he has asked the park's conservationists to draw up contingency plans to insure that water keeps coming in even if the mountain is lost. His staff talks about diverting the flow of nearby rivers to feed Lake Urema or drilling wells to supply watering holes for animals. Carr didn't like the prospect, but he liked grappling with the problem. "It makes it interesting for me—a person who could be anywhere in the whole world," he said.

One afternoon at Chitengo, as we sat by the pool, where tourists were splashing, Carr told me that he has made provisions for the park in his will. He had said repeatedly that before he found Gorongosa he had lived in dread of becoming "a dabbler." Now he told me, "The way I see it is this: I may not be a serious person, but Gorongosa is a serious project." When his friends speak of his hunger for purpose, they always tend to mention that he was once a Mormon, although they generally can't say how or why this is significant. But Larry Hardesty took a stab at it. "When you've been that committed to a religious ideal when you're young, I think that that kind of gives you a taste for what it's like to have some big thing in your life that organizes it and gives it meaning," he said. "I think he was looking for that thing again, trying to replace that monolithic thing at the center of his life."

I told Carr what Hardesty had said, and he said, "I think that's right." Sometimes when he felt that everything was going well in Gorongosa, Carr said to me that he might have to find something else to do with himself in a few years. But then he said, "I have a lot of these weird things in my life where I've gone headlong into something and later I look at it and just go, That was strange. But I get the fever, right? You know, I like getting older and calmer. I don't really want a lot more of those fevers. It's just too much. This is my last fever." ♦

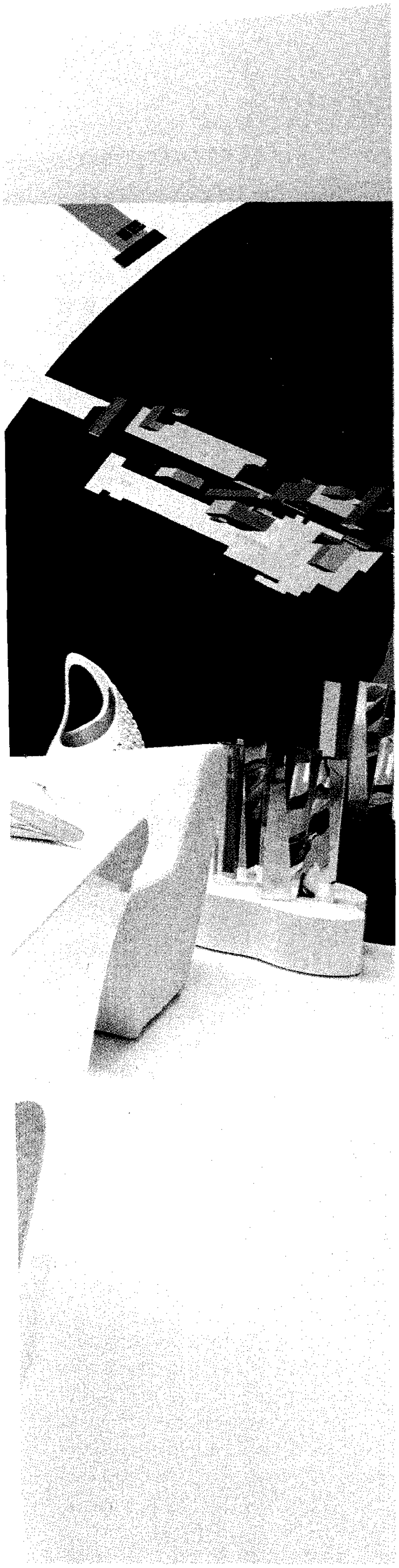


PROFILES

THE ABSTRACTIONIST

Zaha Hadid's unfettered invention.

BY JOHN SEABROOK



One unusually warm afternoon last April, Zaha Hadid, the Baghdad-born, London-based architect, was seated on a banquette in the Mercer, in SoHo, her preferred hotel in New York, eating a chicken panino. Bits of the sandwich were falling out of her mouth as she spoke, in a husky voice. She has a remarkably emotive face, which veers from sweetly girlish to volcanically enraged in a heartbeat (although the heart may skip that beat on witnessing this transformation for the first time). There's a distinctive orange stripe at the crest of her dark hair, and in certain lights it appears to glow, as though heated by the fierce ideation going on in the brain below. Ever since her twenties, Hadid has dressed to be noticed, and today was no exception. Clad in black leggings and a matching long-sleeved top, her body appeared to be made of twisted-together black balloons, and her dramatic cape (like Frank Lloyd Wright, she favors capes)—black, with scalloped edges—brought to mind a high-fashion peasant's shawl, producing an effect that was at once regal and homeless.

The sandwich came with potato chips, and Hadid examined one, turning it in her fingers, which were long and tapered and ended in bright-red nails, before putting it into her mouth. The twisty geometry of an ordinary potato chip, to say nothing of the curves in modern cars and phones, is a reminder of how few buildings look as if they belonged in the digital world. Hadid is devoted to helping architecture catch up. In her buildings, walls are never quite vertical, floors seldom remain flat for long, and the twain meet not in ninety-degree angles but, rather, in the kinds of curves one finds in skateboard parks. ("There are three hundred and fifty-nine other degrees," Hadid likes to say. "Why limit yourself to one?") Few repeating forms—columns, windows, doorframes—guide you through her spaces, which may be why some people, on entering a Zaha Hadid building for the first time, are reminded of childhood experiences in large structures: You're disoriented. You can't say, "I'll be in the back," because there is no back. There's no front, either.

Hadid is rarely in public without an assistant or two nearby. Their job is both to field the calls and e-mails and text messages that stream in at all hours from clients, contractors, and friends around the world, and to serve as a chorus for Hadid's stray thoughts, grievances, and colloquies on topics as varied as Prince Charles's architectural notions ("very scary"), an upcoming dental appointment, and art-world gossip gleaned at last night's dinner party. In New York, she was managing with only one assistant, Roger Howie, who was seated across from her at the Mercer. He was on his third cell-phone battery of the day.

Hadid's largest completed building to date, the National Museum of the XXI Century Arts, or MAXXI, in Rome, was opening in the fall, and plans for a grand celebration were under way. Hadid and Howie reviewed some of the people they planned to invite, and then they discussed all the things they needed to do before leaving for South Korea the following day, to attend a groundbreaking ceremony in Seoul.

A cool breeze from the street blew a change of mood across Hadid. She began to complain bitterly about how cold it was.

"Feel my hands," she said. They were as chilled as the cutlery in an airplane's galley.

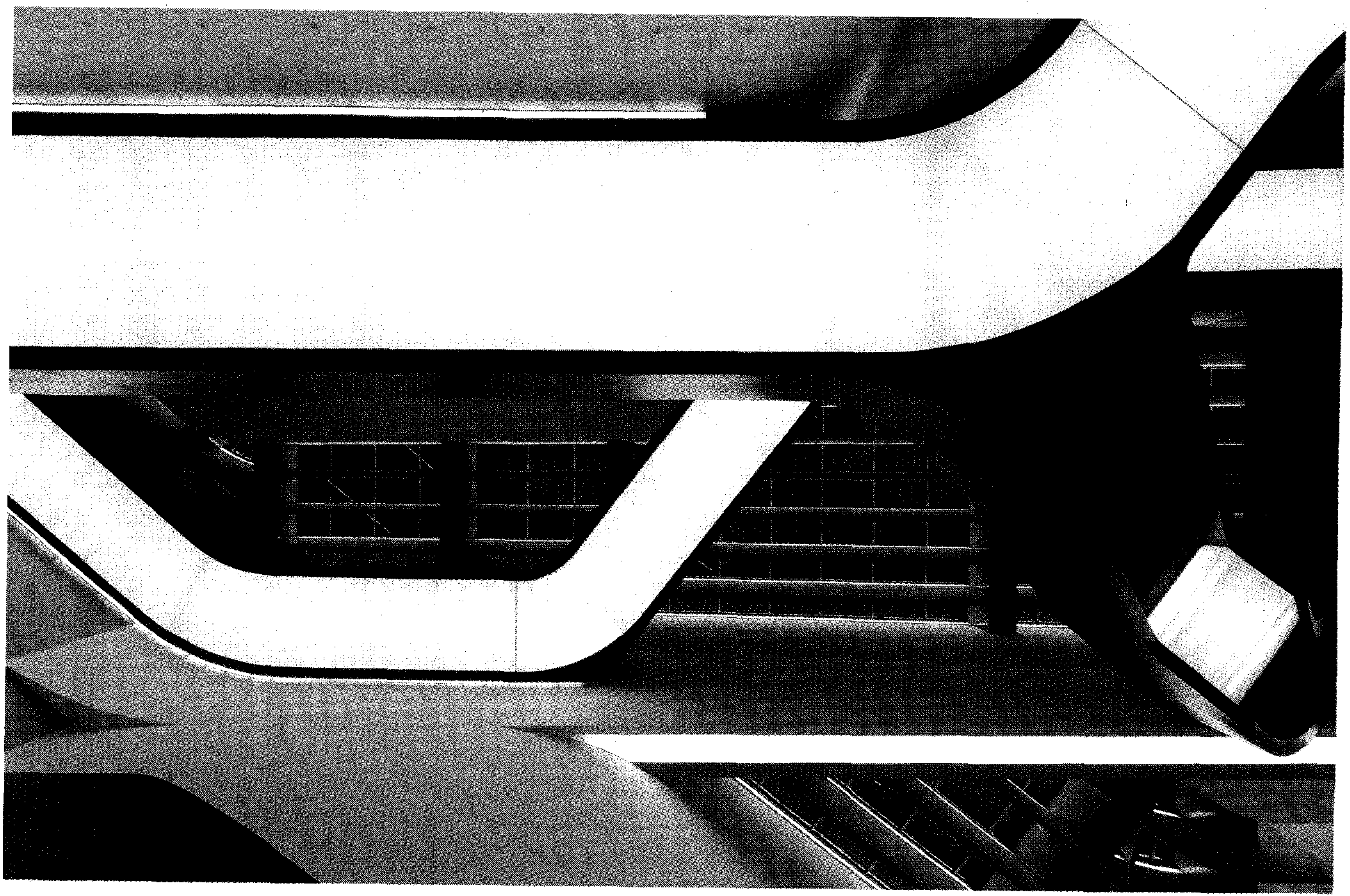
"Oh dear," Howie said.

With a deep scowl, Hadid ordered a waiter to turn off the air-conditioning; the manager arrived to say that it wasn't on. A space heater was located and placed on the banquette beside her.

A text message made it through How-

Hadid in her home, a loft in Clerkenwell, London. Photograph by Miles Aldridge.

ie's digital perimeter into Hadid's phone. People receive texts from her at all hours, depending on where she is and how late she's up. ("Zaha is a night *owl*," an Italian member of her staff told me.) Aaron Betsky, the director of the Cincinnati Art Museum and a noted architectural critic, was once in the front row at a lecture Hadid was giving at Columbia University, when he was startled to realize that she was texting at the same time. He pointed this out to Hani Rashid, the New York-based architect he was sitting next to. Hadid stopped her lecture and barked, "Pay attention, Aaron!"



Inside Hadid's new MAXXI building, in Rome. The structure, an art museum, opened empty of art, an exhibit in its own right.

IWAN BAAN

"Oh, God," Hadid said, reading her phone's display with squinty eyes and shaking her head. "I'm frozen," she said, putting the phone down. "It's impossible; I can't stand it. I'm going up to my room." And with that she left the table.

For an architect so celebrated, Hadid has a relatively small output. She has completed thirteen structures: these include the Vitra Fire Station, in Weil am Rhein, Germany (1994); a train station in Strasbourg (2001); a ski jump in Innsbruck, with an attached restaurant (2002); the Lois and Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, in Cincinnati (2003); the Phaeno Science Center, in Wolfsburg, Germany (2005); the BMW Plant Central Building, in Leipzig (2005); and MAXXI, in Rome (2009). She shows an unusual degree of comfort with changes of scale; she enjoys working on small projects, like furniture and shoes, at the same time that she is designing large structures, like museums and railway stations. Her Aqua Table, a resin-and-silicone dining table she designed in 2005 for Established & Sons, which has sold for as much as two hundred thousand dollars, looks like the roof of her Aquatics Center, in East London, currently under construction, which will be the architectural showpiece of the 2012 Summer Olympics.

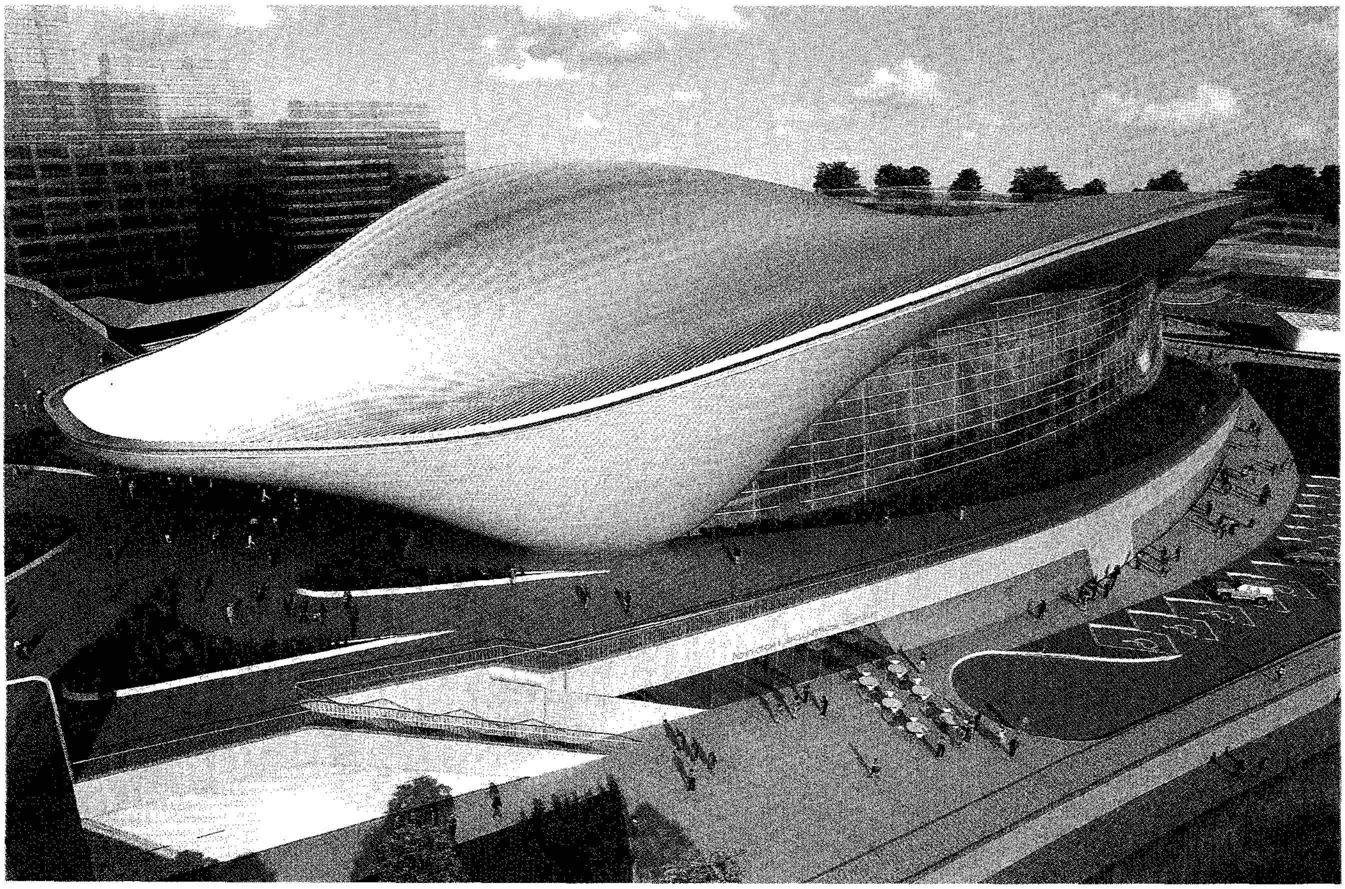
There is no single Hadid style, although one can detect a watermark in her buildings' futuristic smoothness. Certain themes carry through her use of materials (glass, steel, concrete), her lines (corridors often trace flowing arabesque shapes, while roof struts make sharp Z-shaped angles), her structures (she favors column-free spaces), and her sculptural interiors and asymmetric façades. In all her work, Hadid is concerned with movement and speed—both the way people will move through the buildings and the way a sight line travels through light and shadow. Her exteriors seem to be shaped by the movement inside and around them, rather than by some predetermined notion of external form.

Since being awarded the Pritzker Prize, architecture's highest honor, in 2004—the first woman to win it—Hadid, who is fifty-nine, has won competitions for major projects which include an art museum in Vilnius, a cultural center in Baku, and a performing-arts center in Abu Dhabi. Altogether, she has forty-five architectural projects under way. The global recession, which has hurt many of her peers, seems to have barely affected her office.

Her success is as improbable as it is immense. Hadid's radical stance as a practitioner has not changed since she was a student. For years, she submitted abstract drawings and paintings to convey her ideas, because, as she would explain with absolute conviction to dubious clients, abstraction was the best way to capture multiple perspectives in two dimensions, and to bring them together in a "distortion field." She has the temerity to style herself as a temperamental artist in a milieu in which players are expected to present themselves as sober professionals, and, while her eccentricity rankles some, it inspires others; at her Pritzker ceremony, in St. Petersburg, people in the audience wept. She is a woman in the most masculine of the arts, and an Arab—an Iraqi, no less—with fiery political views of her own and a family history steeped in Iraqi politics. She has never been a natural fit, to put it mildly, with the clubby male establishmentarians who dole out the money to put up major buildings. And yet Zaha Hadid Architects is building them.

This fall, I visited the office where these revolutionary designs are created—a two-story institutional building, formerly a government-run elementary school, on Bowling Green Lane, in the Clerkenwell section of London. When Hadid set up shop there, in 1985, her staff numbered some five people and she occupied a single room, No. 9, which was renamed Studio 9. Now, with more than three hundred people on staff, she has taken over the whole building. The atmosphere still feels scholastic, except that the students are older, and they're architects. Of many different nationalities, almost half of them under thirty, they sit quietly, shoulder to shoulder, staring at screens, roughly grouped according to the geography of the project—Far Eastern over there, Middle Eastern there, European there, North American there. All of them look alert and serious, like model pupils.

Work usually comes to Hadid's firm through competitions. (In the E.U., all public-sector buildings are required to hold competitions to select an architect.) ZHA enters some thirty each year. A project architect is assigned to a particular competition, reads through the brief, and discusses the project with Hadid. She makes a few freehand sketches, working with lines inspired by the "forces" of the site. (Hadid rarely uses the word "space" in talking about her designs, preferring words like "energy" and "field" and "ground conditions"; the dynamism of the city, rather than the static forms of buildings within it, is her source of inspiration.) Then three or four architects work up her sketches into traditional two-dimensional drawings, 3-D digital renderings, and physical models made of Plexiglas, cardboard, or wood. If the office feels confident of its chances of winning a particular competition, as many as twenty people move onto the project, and the pace of work increases as the competition's deadline looms. Each such process takes six or seven weeks.



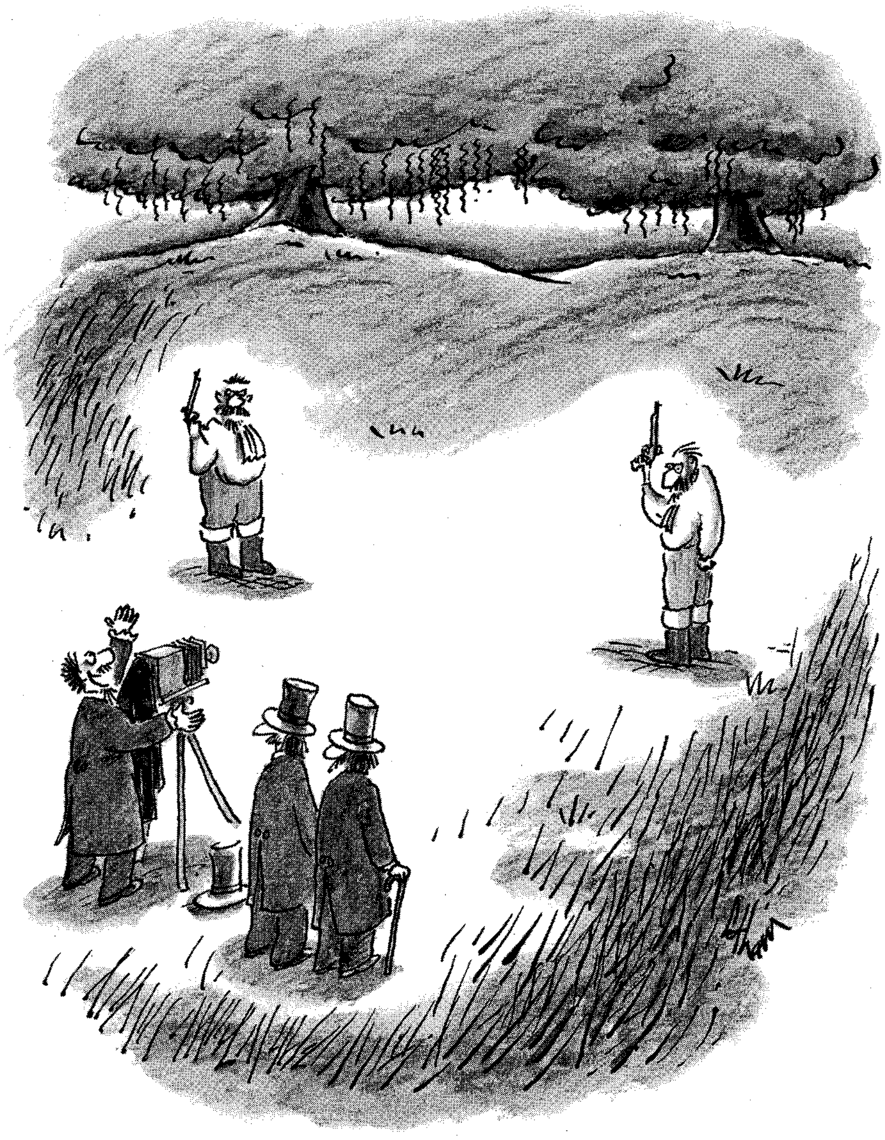
The Aquatics Center for the 2012 London Olympics will be Hadid's first completed major building in her adopted country.

COURTESY ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS

The trophies of victorious competitions past are scattered around the office—models, paintings, and digital renderings, known in the office as Silver Paintings. To stroll through the former school is to see the impossible become inevitable in the blink of an eye. There's a rendering of three side-by-side "dancing" office towers in Dubai that resemble blades of grass (construction has yet to begin). A high-speed railway station in Naples, scheduled for completion in 2013, looks stretched, like a train speeding past you. There are also master plans for portions of Singapore, Istanbul, and Cairo—all of them competition winners, in which the building lots are biomorphically shaped, like coral growing over rock.

But the strangest images are Hadid's paintings from the eighties. Instead of trying to represent rectilinear spaces with perspectival drawings, which have been part of architectural plans since the Renaissance, Hadid was trying to incorporate foreshortening into the structures themselves, so that the rectangles became trapezoids. Moreover, Hadid was aiming not just for one perspective but for five or six perspectives in a single plan, joining them together in warped planes that resemble both Cubist paintings and photographs taken through a fish-eye lens. Perhaps it was a lucky coincidence that computer-aided design tools came along at precisely the right moment in Hadid's evolution—around 1990, when her language was fully formed but her projects were widely judged to be unbuildable. Or maybe she was a prophet of what has come to be known as digital architecture. In any case, the computer was only a tool that helped her realize a preëxisting vision; it did not create her aesthetic.

Hadid sat right in the middle of Studio 9 for many years; she has never had her own office. Arriving late in the morning, she would sketch quietly for an hour or so, then begin asking to see various projects, and workers would feed her plans and renderings. In recent years, however, she has let her business partner, Patrik Schumacher, who is forty-eight and a rational, no-nonsense German, run the office, while she often works and takes meetings at her home, a five-minute walk through the neighborhood's narrow streets. She owns the top floor of a nondescript five-story loft building, where she lives alone (she has never been married). The entirely white space is filled with furniture and paintings, all of which she created. She is not a collector of the works of others, unless you count her clothes (they take up a huge closet, which was also designed by her office) and her jewelry, piled like pirate's booty on a table in her dressing room. Apart from its contents, her living space is surprisingly conventional, which is the way Hadid likes it. "It's not my project," she once said.



"Could I ask you two to move closer together?"

Hadid was born into a wealthy family in Baghdad, in 1950, and she grew up at a time when Iraq's capital was a secular, cosmopolitan, progressive city, full of new ideas and cultural experiments. In her Pritzker address, Hadid recalled the utopian spirit of the era—"an unbroken belief in progress and a great sense of optimism about the potential of constructing a better world." Her parents, both from distinguished families, had a large house that had been built in the nineteen-thirties. "The style of the furniture in my room was angular and modernist," Hadid told me. "I remember as a child really wanting to know why these things looked different. Why is this sofa different from an ordinary sofa?" She had an asymmetric mirror. "I was thrilled by the mirror," she once told the London *Times*. "It started my love of asymmetry." There were some traditional furnishings, too, including large Persian carpets with intricate patterns, which interpreters of Hadid's work would later find echoed in the densely woven lines of her drawings. Hadid explained to me, "You have to understand there is no figurative art in Arabic tradition—it is all decorative patterns that come from geometric design. So, of course, those things influence you."

Her father, Muhammad Hadid, was an important political figure in the nineteen-forties and fifties, as the leader of the National Democratic Party. He served as the Minister of Finance in Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim's government, which assumed control after the coup d'état of 1958, known as the 14th July Revolution, in which King Faisal II and members of the Hashemite royal family were executed. "People were always coming and going at our house," Hadid remembered, "and everyone talked about politics all the time in the big living room." A blur of people moving through a cosmopolitan, mod-

"I lied when I told you I shave my head."

• •

ern space is an image she carried forward into her work. Her father's political career ended when the Baathist Party took over Iraq, in 1963.

Hadid's parents remained in the country, but Zaha was sent to boarding schools in England and Switzerland when she was sixteen. Her two brothers, Foulath and Haytham, who were older by twelve and fifteen years, had both gone to Cambridge University, and she spent a lot of time with them in London. "It was the nineteen-sixties, and I was becoming aware of all the new identity issues, and the political changes, and all the dreams of nation-building," she told me. She would return to Baghdad for holidays. "It was a great place, and I often thought of it. I still do," she said. But she hasn't been back since 1980; the house she grew up in is still standing, boarded up.

Hadid knew she wanted to be an architect "by the time I was eleven or twelve years old." She wasn't interested in attending Cambridge, but at the American University in Beirut, where she went in 1968, she studied mathematics, rather than architecture, because architecture was part of the engineering department, and "I didn't want to go there because I would have been the only woman in it." Like Baghdad, Beirut was a center of culture and ideas. But it, too, was doomed: the city would be torn apart in the civil war that began in 1975. (The splintering aspect of Hadid's early work, in which landscapes and buildings seem to be exploding from within, may have something to do with the fact that she became an exile from the cities she knew best as a child and a young woman.) In 1972, Hadid moved to London, where she was accepted at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, which one of Foulath's friends had told her was the only place to go.

The Architectural Association, in Bedford Square, is the oldest independent school of architecture in the United Kingdom. Many students of architecture have an almost medieval apprentice-master relationship with teachers; at the A.A., however, students have long been encouraged to challenge faculty and visiting lecturers to defend their ideas and designs in public, and the fact that there is a bar just outside the main lecture hall helps fuel these discussions. Hadid arrived at a time when the public's faith in modernist architecture, which had been the dominant style for large-scale buildings for most of the postwar period, was at a low ebb, mainly as a result of failed experiments in urban planning and public housing undertaken in the nineteen-sixties. "It was a moment at which modernism was widely pronounced dead, and no one knew where to go from here," Bernard Tschumi, the French-Swiss architect, who was a young member of the faculty at that time, told me. "Which is a great advantage for an architect," he added. Some instructors, such as the Luxembourg-born architect Léon Krier, thought that architecture should preserve the best of the past, which could be made better thanks to technological innovations. The view of old European city centers as "finished," requiring only restoration and resurrection of existing buildings, was beginning to emerge. However, other instructors, such as the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, the Greek architect Elia Zenghelis, and the Polish-born American architect Daniel Libeskind, wanted to continue to investigate modernism. "Our idea was there might be blind alleys that modernism had left behind which we could develop," Koolhaas told me recently.

Of particular interest was the Russian avant-garde, and the movement known as Constructivism, which had flourished after the Bolshevik Revolution, until Stalin made his dislike of its style clear, and its ambitious, utopian architectural designs were replaced by the monolithic, city-block-sized forms of Stalinist architecture. Yet because the later ideological labels that would be used to categorize architects had not been invented when Hadid was a student—the deconstructivists and postmodernists to the left; the neo-traditionalists and new urbanists to the right—architects who would later end up on opposite sides of ideological rivalries were colleagues, and often taught together. The A.A.'s chairman, Alvin Boyarsky, made sure that the faculty and guest lecturers represented a global range of ideas.

In her third year, Hadid was assigned to a unit taught by Léon Krier. (Classes at the A.A. follow a unit system, in which a group of students spend the whole year together, under the same instructor.) "Zaha was very unquiet," Krier recalled not long ago, when he was in the U.S. shortly after the publication of his book "Drawing for Architecture." "She was obviously deeply committed, but she wasn't sure what to do with it. She couldn't draw, really. She was all over the map. She was always incredibly energetic and helpful around the class, and she practically became my assistant. But she was really struggling, and tempestuous. I set her to do a project on Trafalgar Square. The idea was to shrink it down and make it into more of an Italian-style piazza. Well, that wasn't her cup of tea at all."

By that time, Koolhaas had joined the A.A. faculty. He had spent some of the previous year in New York, where he was working on the material that eventually became "Delirious New York" (1978). Hadid attended several of Koolhaas's lectures, in which he articulated his vision of the city. New York, for Koolhaas, was a mutant, uncontrollable city that grew like bacteria. Hadid was inspired. "There was a glimpse that one can create new things," she told me. "The Krier attitude was that you can't do better than was done in the past, so why bother trying."

Hadid went to see Koolhaas about switching to the unit that he and Elia Zenghelis were running. "She was very noticeable," Koolhaas remembered. "She was dressed in a way that forced you to notice her, but very stylish. I also remember her beautifully expressive Middle Eastern face." They accepted Hadid, and Koolhaas schooled her in draftsmanship, installing her in an attic room at the A.A. and making her draw for hours every day. "The steadiness of her hand was remarkable, as she drew these long, flowing lines," Koolhaas told me. "There was a strong element of calligraphy that emerged—the influence of her Arabic background was very clear. It was as if every sketch was also a statement." Hadid recalled, "Most of the work was spent studying projects of Koolhaas's and Tschumi's, among other architects, for buildings that had no hope of being built. Perhaps because there was so little hope, the whole atmosphere was supercharged and incredibly intense—five-hour lectures, all-night drawing sessions, wild, crazy ideas. These people took risks, and that showed me the value of taking risks—of putting yourself on the line."

As part of their work on the Russian avant-garde, Hadid's unit studied Suprematism, the abstract movement founded by the painter Kazimir Malevich. Malevich painted layered geometric masses—his simple black square on a white field, which he first showed in 1915, has become the most iconic of these images. He presented his work as studies in non-Euclidean geometry, but at its heart there is a sort of spatial mysticism; Malevich spoke of discovering a third and even a fourth dimension in a painting, by juxtaposing geometries. He was also deeply interested in architecture. In "The Non-Objective World," a manifesto from 1926, he wrote, "The new art of Suprematism, which has produced new forms and form relationships by giving external expression to pictorial feeling, will become a new architecture: it will transfer these forms from the surface of canvas to space." He produced a series of abstract models for buildings, which he called "architektons," and which he showed in the mid-nineteen-twenties. But by the early thirties, under Stalinist arts policy, abstract artists like Malevich were judged to be bourgeois, because their work did not express social realities and the class struggle. Malevich was banned from exhibiting his work; he died, of cancer, in 1935, at the age of fifty-six.

Hadid saw something in the architektons, and she made it her project to complete Malevich's work—in effect, to design an abstract building. She struggled to scale the designs and place them in an urban context, while keeping the geometric shapes, which were mostly squares and rectangles. In the course of the next decade, she tried a number of different techniques—drawing in ink, enlarging the drawings, and transferring them, using carbon paper, to canvas, which she would then paint with acrylic. Sometimes, to create an effect of light fading away, she would soften the ends of her lines by painting over them with a water-soaked brush, a method she called "whooshing." As she worked, the influence of another giant of the Russian avant-garde, Wassily Kandinsky, whom she had also studied under Koolhaas, began to emerge in her designs, particularly in the flowing lines that connected the blockier, Malevich-inspired shapes. (Kandinsky made renderings of Arabic calligraphy during an extended visit to Tunis in 1905, and some critics see the influence of those studies in his later work.)

Not many people understood what Hadid was doing, but Koolhaas encouraged her. "That gave me tremendous confidence," she told me. She worked like a fanatic, staying up all night, smoking (she finally quit, cold turkey, when she was fifty), until at last the two-dimensional solids in the Malevich paintings started to give way, and they began floating like transparent volumes, layered in space.

"Abstraction opened the possibility of unfettered invention," Hadid said in her Pritzker address. When I asked her to explain how, she said that abstraction gave her a way to study how lines intersect. When she drew, she said, "I wanted to capture a line, and the way a line changes and distorts when you try to follow it through a building, as it passes through regions of light and shadow. You know when you look through a building from a window on the outside, and the line you are following is distorted by the space? That was what I was trying to see with my paintings and my whooshings."

In her final year at the A.A., in 1977, Hadid won the Diploma Prize for her portfolio, which included "Malevich's Tektonik," a fourteen-story hotel that stretches over London's Hungerford Bridge, leaving fragments of the central structure scattered over the South Bank. As she explains in "Zaha Hadid: Complete Works," "The structure's fourteen levels systematically adhere to the tektonik, turning all conceivable constraints into new possibilities for space." The project was widely praised, although it was never built. Aaron Betsky, of the Cincinnati Art Museum, told me, "You can't underestimate the impact that her project had. It really was one of these very rare moments when a fissure opens up in architecture, and a different way of seeing emerges. We no longer have to be bound by gravity. We don't have to accept reality—she will unfold her own reality." Upon graduating, Hadid was offered a position as a partner in Koolhaas's firm, but she remained there for only a year. She was, as Koolhaas had written in her final-year report at the A.A., "a planet in her own inimitable orbit."

I next saw Hadid in London, in October, when we attended the opening party for the Frieze Art Fair, an annual show of contemporary art. Many of Hadid's friends were in town for it, and she had been invited to no fewer than ten dinners that evening.

"Ten dinners!" Roger Howie exclaimed with a laugh when he heard this. "I'll be lucky if I get one!"

Since I had seen her in New York, Hadid had been to Cairo, where she is building a hotel and office tower by the Nile (and where she had fallen at the Four Seasons Hotel and hurt her knee), and to Spain, where her firm had won a competition to create a master plan for the Zorrozaurre peninsula, in Bilbao, and is constructing a new headquarters for the regional transit authority there. She had been awarded the Praemium Imperiale for Architecture, in Japan, and was leaving in several days for the ceremony. Meanwhile, the opening of MAXXI, in Rome, was scheduled for the middle of November.

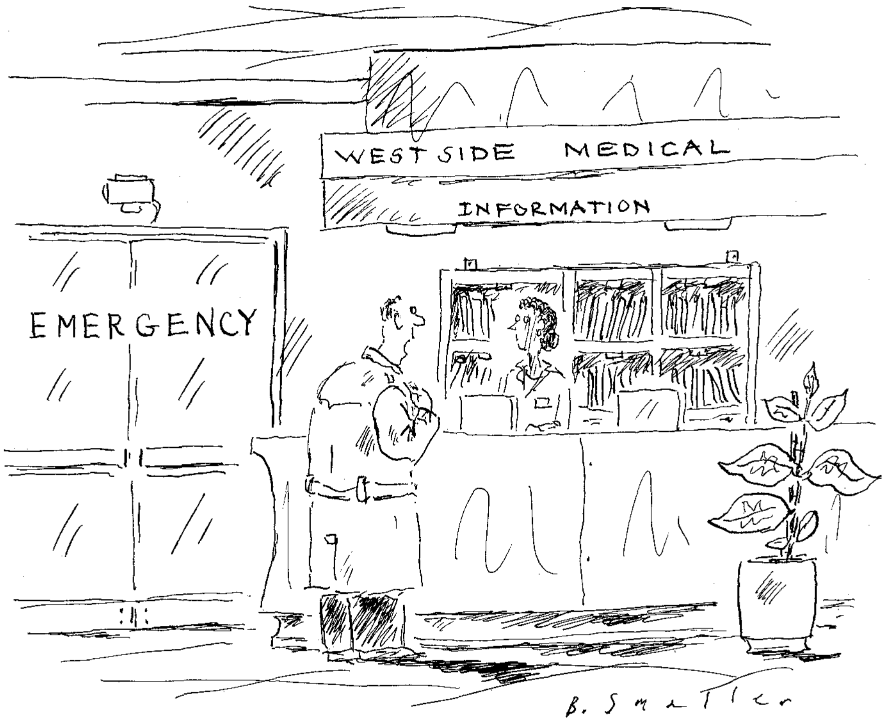
The Frieze was held in a very large white tent in Regent's Park, where some hundred and sixty-five galleries had set up temporary spaces to show their paintings. As Hadid entered, a black cloud came in with her. It was with visible effort that she willed the downturned corners of her mouth into a smile for me; a moment later they collapsed again, as though weighted with lead sinkers.

"I don't think I'll stay. It's too much," she said, with a shiver. She had the dentist tomorrow, she said, and "the swine"—a flu shot, which she wanted to get before flying to Japan. I looked at paintings for ten minutes, and by the time we met again the cloud had lifted and the sun had broken through.

Hadid had on a three-quarter-sleeved black coat, over a stretchy black top and leggings, and short brown boots with silver zippers. She wore a heavy black molded-plastic Prada bracelet on her left wrist and carried a pale-gray Issey Miyake bag, which appeared to be empty except for a pair of goggle-like sunglasses. An assistant carried Hadid's other things in her own bulging bag.

Hadid bumped into Michael Craig-Martin, a British artist who created a portrait of Zaha that hangs in the National Portrait Gallery, in Trafalgar Square. The portrait is on a computer screen: Hadid's face, eyes, and hair change color constantly, driven by a randomized computer program. "Be-

"How about a quick espresso before school, Toby?"



"I'm not sure I need an emergency room—is there a reassurance room?"

cause that's how you are!" Craig-Martin declared, laughing.

"Yes, but he made my face green and my eyes purple," Hadid muttered to me. "I'm not so sure it's how I want to look."

Walking around, Hadid exclaimed that she was struck by the number of abstract paintings, and she spent some time studying a colorful abstraction by the British artist Peter Davies. She mentioned several times how "graphic" the show was, over all, and how much more painting there was, as opposed to installations—a development that she clearly approved of—noting the "distortion" in several canvases. "It's like what I used to do before computers—now they're doing it again after computers."

Sitting down on a bench to rest, she recalled an epiphany she had one winter on a flight to New York, when the plane, beginning to descend, passed over Atlantic City. "The sun was going down, and the water was red, the buildings were black, and the streets were white, because it had just snowed, and I realized, looking down, that the landscape was just like one of my paintings. It proved to me that these abstract conditions I try for in my paintings do exist in real life—and I had painted them before I saw them. It was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life."

A little girl in a pink dress caught her attention. Hadid watched her pull her foot out of her shoe and twist one ankle around the other. She said, "You know, we think that people become individuals only later in life, and that children are unmolded, but you can see, can't you, that they are individuals very early on."

Her assistant came up to say, firmly, that Hadid really had to go; the dinner party she had chosen to attend, given by Robert H. Tuttle, the former American Ambassador to Great Britain, was in a private club and she couldn't be late (although she would be). And she had to go home and change first.

"And I have that horrible swine tomorrow," Hadid wailed plaintively as she was led from the tent.

Between Hadid's Hungerford Bridge graduation project, in 1977, and her first major commission, for the Center for Contemporary Art, in Cincinnati, in 1997, stretches a twenty-year period in which Hadid built only one building, a small firehouse in Weil am Rhein, Germany, that has since been converted into a museum. She had become famous, but more for her persona and for the buildings she hadn't built. She gave popular lectures at Harvard, Columbia, and the A.A., where she spent ten years after she graduated teaching and running a studio. She curated important exhibitions, such as the Russian avant-garde show at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, in 1992, and she submitted entries for several high-profile competitions, including the Irish Prime Minister's residence, in Dublin (1979-80), Parc de la Villette, in Paris (1982-83), and a leisure and recreational center on the Peak, in Hong Kong, in 1983. She won the Peak project, and although it was never built—the developer went bankrupt—it was the first intimation to many in the architecture world that she might be more than a "paper architect."

During her early years, Hadid worked out of a small mews house, in Kensington, largely on her own, although sometimes she hired assistants—usually students from the A.A. They often worked late into the night, and sometimes pulled multiple all-nighters to meet deadlines. Zaha would burst into song from time to time, singing whatever was on the radio, although she was partial to the blues; she has an excellent voice. The staff also watched films on her VCR—Richard Gere movies were a particular favorite. Hadid could be a punishing boss, but she was also generous and loyal. "She's tough, she is volatile, sometimes explosive, but she's also fair and honest," a former staff member told me. "She'll scream at you, then she's the first person there to help you out if you're ill or heartbroken." In 1980, she started Zaha Hadid Architects, and moved to the school building in Clerkenwell five years later; Patrik Schumacher joined her in 1988.

In 1990, Rolf Fehlbaum, the C.E.O. of Vitra, a modernist furniture company, asked Hadid to build a fire station for the volunteer fire department at the company's production plant in Weil am Rhein. (First, Fehlbaum said, he had asked Hadid to design a chair, but after six months' work Hadid said that it was impossible. "There are a lot of chairs," she told him.) It is an intensely angular building, with a beaklike concrete prow jutting over the entrance, and an elongated body. It is constructed entirely of exposed concrete. Inside, dividing walls end midway through rooms in sharp angles, and passageways open into different parts of the fire station and a bicycle shed.

In 1994, ZHA entered an international competition to build the Cardiff Bay Opera House, a new home for the Welsh National Opera. The competition was run by the trustees of the opera house, and chaired by Nicholas Crickhowell, who later wrote the book "Opera House Lottery," about the culture war that erupted over Hadid's design. The trustees hoped a spectacular building would do for Cardiff what the Sydney Opera House had done for Sydney—make the city a cultural destination. Hadid's plan, which she described as "an inverted necklace" with "a series of jewels," was chosen out of two hundred and sixty-nine entries. It was a spectacular building, if not an especially pretty one. ("I don't design nice buildings—I don't like them," she has said.) As in the Vitra Fire Station, there were a lot of pointy angles, and the interior layout mixed rooms and passageways in such a way that it was difficult to tell where one ended and another began. The main stage was asymmetric, and the auditorium was encased in glass and had views of Cardiff Bay.

"It was an absolutely brilliant design, both from an artistic and a functional point of view," Lord Peter Palumbo, a former chairman of the Arts Council and a member of the jury, told me. (His wife, Hayat, is an old friend of Hadid's from her college days in Beirut.) But the jurors had no control over the funding, which was coming from the Millennium Commission's National Lottery Fund—money that had been set aside from the United Kingdom's national lottery for investment in public works to celebrate the year 2000.

The idea that working stiffs who play the lottery were subsidizing an opera house for pretentious toffs, and that the place was designed by an Arab lady interested in abstract painting, did not sit well with many of the Welsh, and when rumors circulated that the Millennium Stadium, a new home for the Welsh national rugby team, might not be built as a result of the cost of what was mockingly called the "crystal necklace," some folks got quite cross indeed. A Welsh M.P. said that the opera house's design was "identical to the shrine in Mecca," and that there was likely to be a fatwa issued on the building.

To the neo-traditionalists, whose opposition to forward-thinking architects had hardened since Hadid studied at the A.A., the Cardiff Bay project was a prime example of the modernist arrogance that Charles, the Prince of Wales, had taken a personal interest in scotching. Prince Charles had recruited to his camp, among others, Léon Krier, who has been an adviser to the Prince since 1986. Krier served as the master planner on Poundbury, a neo-traditional "urban extension" of the town of Dorchester, built on the Prince's property, and which illustrates the kind of architecture and urban planning that Prince Charles favors: small, dense, pedestrian-friendly, discreet. Krier, who remains friendly with Hadid, did not comment publicly on the Cardiff Bay project, but others in Prince Charles's circle did. Crickhowell quotes Colin Amery, an architecture critic, as having written that Hadid's building had been designed for "that small group of international architects who perform largely for each other as a kind of traveling circus . . . representing the kind of absurd architectural arrogance that the public has long learned to distrust." In 1995, the Millennium Commission scrapped the opera-house project, saying, among other things, that the building wasn't "distinctive" enough.

"It was disgusting the way I was treated," Hadid told me, when I saw her at her home, the day after the

SECRET SANTA
What are you wearing, Millie?

Frieze Art Fair. "These British women would tell little jokes. 'Where's your husband?' they'd ask. I'd say, 'I don't have a husband.' 'Oh, is he in jail? *Tee-hee!*' It was awful. 'We don't want a fatwa! *Tee-hee!*'" She added, "There were people who wouldn't look me in the eye."

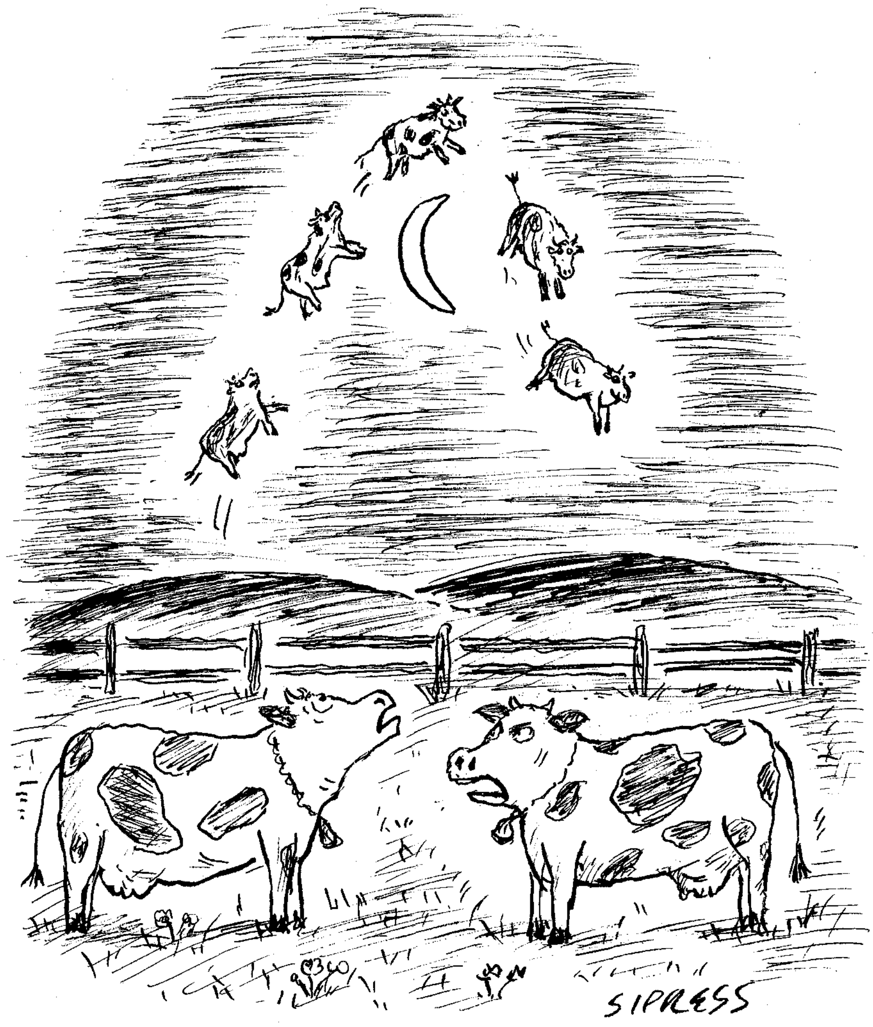
Hadid had become a symbol of what architectural conservatives hate about the "starchitect" approach to high-profile buildings. She still feels "stigmatized" by the Cardiff Bay debacle, which is one reason she has done so little in her adopted homeland; the Aquatics Center, for the 2012 Olympics, will be her first major building. "To this day, the establishment won't give me a corporate project in Britain," she said. "I'm blocked here, effectively." Last year, she went to a meeting with a major property developer in London, and was told that they couldn't understand her drawings. "This is after I built the BMW factory. They can't understand the drawings?" She added, "I think they can't stand the idea of a strong woman. I don't know why. Maybe it's because they have small willies." She gave a loud, guttural laugh, her dark eyes flashing.

"Losing the Cardiff Bay project was the turning point in Zaha's career," Lord Palumbo told me in London recently. "She was absolutely devastated, but it put the iron into her. She said, 'Right, I'm not going to let that happen again.'" The name Hadid, he reminded me, means "iron" in Arabic. "This is a lady with a very powerful will." In the next three years, Hadid won five more major competitions, and this time the buildings went up.

Computer-modelling software arrived in Hadid's office in 1990. Before that, Patrik Schumacher told me, the office had difficulty modelling Hadid's warped, multi-perspective designs. Traditionally, architects draw plans and sections by hand and with drafting tools, using common geometric shapes—circles, triangles, rectangles, squares. In an effort to distort these shapes, Schumacher said, they used the sizing tool on the photocopier. They would place drawings on the glass diagonally and instruct the machine to shrink or expand them; in squeezing and stretching the image, the machine warped the lines. The architects would also drag drawings across the glass as the light bar moved, creating triangles that bulged, as though pregnant, and squares that looked like molars. "To make the drawings and the models, we turned to shipbuilders," Schumacher said, "because in making the hulls of ships they work with the kind of elastic curves we were using." Long, flexible strips of wood were bent with weights to create curved laths, or splines. Mathematicians had studied splines and pieced together formulas to explain them, but until these formulas were incorporated into modelling software they weren't of much use to architects.

In the early nineties, the office began using a program called Model Shop, which was created for Apple computers. By the late nineties, they had switched to Maya, which was invented for animators to model elements like curtains and windblown hair; it became the standard program in computer-aided design. Although Hadid did not like working on the computer—she hated the mouse—she was quick to grasp its advantages as a 3-D modelling tool, and the ease with which one could alter the scale of drawings. With the move to the computer, her architecture began to change; the sharp angles of her early Malevich-inspired designs gave way to more biomorphic shapes.

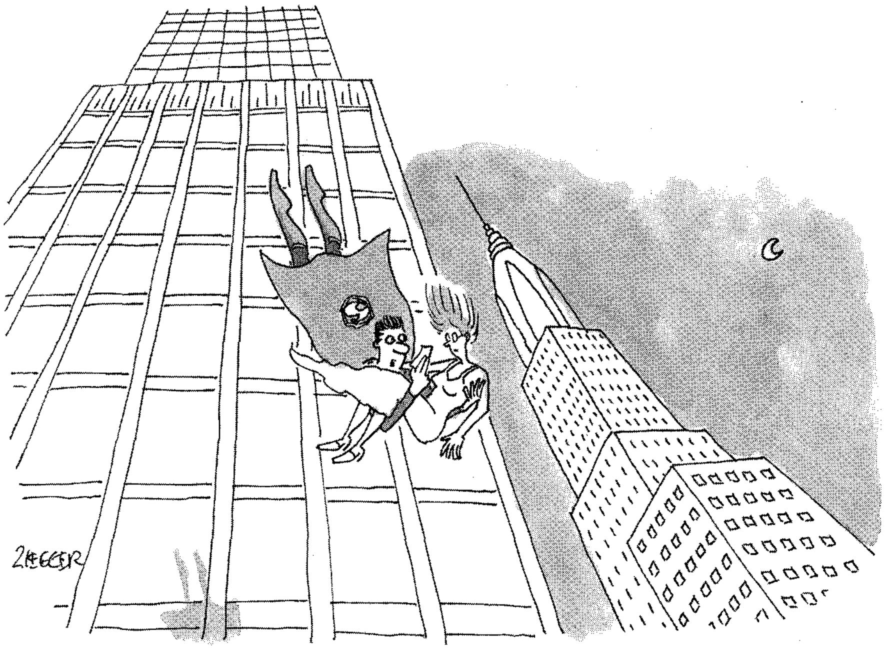
Still, there remained the problem of engineering: how to actually build Hadid's visions. Architects, it has been said, don't build; they draw. And translating her designs for fabricators and contractors had always been the sticking point in Hadid's practice. One reason she remained in Britain (she became a British citizen in 1989) was the extraordinary ingenuity of British engineers, a tradition that goes back to the Victorian era, when they created



"It's lost all meaning in the steroid era."

such engineering masterpieces as the Crystal Palace (originally erected in Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition, in 1851), and Paddington Station (1854). Early in her practice, she realized that civil engineers, who build roads and bridges, had much to offer her, because in civil engineering the materials employed in realizing the design often serve as the supporting structures themselves. (In a concrete roadway, for example, structure, shape, and surface are all created by the same material.) Structural engineers were also important to her, none more so than Peter Rice, the Northern Irish engineer who helped erect the Sydney Opera House and the Centre Pompidou, in Paris, whom she met and collaborated with in the nineteen-eighties. Although their collaboration did not result in any buildings, "he taught me that engineering is essentially common sense."

Around 2000, software designed for the aircraft industry was reconfigured by Frank Gehry's office to create the program called Digital Project, which let architects transmit their plans directly to fabricators and contractors; no interpretive engineering drawings were necessary. This meant that even large-scale structures could mostly be made piecemeal, off site. Every piece is stamped with a bar code, so that the contractor knows exactly where it goes, and then the structure is assembled on site, like a Lego kit. The Fordist model of mass-produced structures, which led to skyscrapers, had ended; with little extra cost, architects could design buildings in which no two windows or doorframes or wall studs were the same. The real world had finally caught up with Hadid's vision.



"Here's my card, sweetie. I also happen to do a bit of lawyering on the side."

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Before the opening of MAXXI, in Rome, the cultural traveller interested in experiencing Hadid's architecture on a large scale had to leave the beaten path. For Americans, the Center for Contemporary Art, in Cincinnati, is the easiest example to reach. The space is constrained by a relatively small building site, but Hadid has loaded it with a baroque display of strange vistas. The outdoor sidewalk continues into the building as a concrete path all the way across the lobby, an example of what Hadid calls the "urban carpet." Overhead soars a two-story atrium, with glimpses of sculpted passageways leading off it. If you take the stairs, and the architect clearly wants you to, you are rewarded with another, surprise atrium, on the second floor, which reveals the next four floors of the structure (although it's impossible to say where one floor ends and another begins).

The Phaeno Science Center, completed in 2005 in Wolfsburg, Germany, sits on a much bigger building site—a former vacant parking lot between a railway station and a mile-long Volkswagen factory, originally constructed in 1938, which remains the main VW plant. From the outside, the building looks as much like landscape as it does architecture—a weird three-sided concrete boulder, perhaps a glacial erratic left behind when a future ice age melts, dotted with irregularly cut windows. It is made out of "self-compacting" concrete, which was developed in Japan in the late nineteen-eighties for bridge-and-tunnel construction, and does not require vibration to make it set or trowelling to make it smooth. The five-hundred-foot-long structure is raised about twenty-three feet off the ground, supported by ten giant steel-reinforced concrete cones that house services, including a bookstore, a conference room, a two-hundred-and-fifty-seat theatre, and the science center's entrance. The interior, with its curving floors, is like a landscape of dunes, or a par 3 on a seaside golf course. Children run delightedly between the different science exhibits, their feet pattering over Hadid's pillowy shapes.

The BMW building, in Leipzig, shares a similar sculptural concrete interior, but here the purpose is work, not play. The building serves as the office space for some six hundred managers and office employees. It sits between the site's three enormous car-manufacturing facilities: the "Body in White" facility, where the steel frames of the cars are assembled; the "Paint Shop" facility; and the "Assembly" facility, in which the components are installed. Included in the brief was the directive to create better communication between the white-collar workers and the factory. ZHA designed a very high, open space in which desks are arranged in ascending tiers, like the landscaped rice fields in Bali. Cars pass slowly overhead on a conveyor belt, moving from one facility to another. The ramps are open, with low sides, and they're lit from below in BMW blue, the corporate color; the vehicles glow with it. The plant spokesperson, Michael Janssen, who gave me a tour, said that communication between plant workers and administrators has improved dramatically.

Hadid arrived in Rome three days before the MAXXI's opening ceremony, on November 12th, flying from Zurich, where she'd had a client meeting, and ensconcing herself in the luxurious Hotel de Russie, just off the Piazza del Popolo, while her staff stayed nearby, in the less expensive Hotel Locarno.

Generally speaking, museums don't open until the art is hung. But the MAXXI would open empty, partly because the museum has not yet acquired nearly enough contemporary art to fill the vast gallery spaces (it won't be a fully functioning museum until next spring, at the earliest). Also, the people of Italy, who paid a hundred and fifty million euros for the building, had been waiting ten years to see it. Empty, however, the natural order of things seemed slightly out of whack. Architecture, as Walter Benjamin suggested, is best seen out of one's peripheral vision. The empty MAXXI forced you to stare at it.

On opening day, I walked to the museum, in the residential neighborhood of Flaminio, from the Piazza del Popolo, which took about twenty-five minutes. Large banners saying "ZAHA HADID" and "MAXXI" fluttered down one side of the three-story structure. There is no main façade, and no real front or back, and the most dramatic part of the building, which is the cantilevered gallery that juts from the third floor, faces away from the main entrance. The structure is made of crossed strands, like a tangle of fettuccine. These wavy spaces are remarkably true to the sketches that Hadid drew in 1998, at the onset of the MAXXI competition, on lined paper in ink.

As one steps inside the building, the eye goes first to the central staircase, which is lit from below by bright white light—a bolt of energy that zigzags up the big open atrium to the glass rooftop, where steel ribs, which support louvres that close when the sun gets too bright, embody more of the arabesques that Hadid's pen traced on paper eleven years earlier.

Applause sounded when Hadid entered the atrium, at around 10:30 A.M., a short, diaphanous petrol-blue chiffon cape floating behind her. She wore a white-gold pendant that looked a bit like a sommelier's cup and a ring that had a long rectangular silver piece affixed to it, like stylized brass knuckles. She gave a short speech in an asymmetrically shaped gallery on the ground floor, recalling her first trip to Rome, with her parents, when she was ten. She seemed apprehensive about what the Romans would do with the building when it came time to hang the art. (Hadid wants to suspend paintings from the steel ribs in the ceiling, in the middle of the galleries.) "I'm sure I'll come back to make sure they haven't done anything odd," she said, as the museum officials looked on. "I'm watching. O.K.?"

Afterward, she retired to an upstairs gallery, where select members of the press were admitted, while a noisy scrum of excluded journalists, mostly Italian, collected outside the doors.

An Italian TV journalist who had managed to get in asked grandly, "How does it feel to be the first woman to design a public building in the city of the emperors?"

Hadid replied, "I don't know. I've always been a woman. I don't go around thinking of myself as a woman on a daily basis."

A Belgian journalist asked whether, by making such a dramatic building, Hadid risked overshadowing the art inside it. "Can a museum be a work of art?" he asked.

"If you think the museum should be a white box, then I suppose you might see it that way," Hadid answered. "But art through the centuries has been displayed in baroque palaces, and in churches, and people don't say that takes away from it."

What did she say to the criticism that her buildings were overwhelming? "Are they inviting to humans?" a Dutch journalist asked.

"Would they say that about landscape?" Hadid shot back. "Do people get overwhelmed when they go to a mountain or a park? No—they go to relax. So we try to do something that makes an impression more like a landscape."

Later, I met the British artist Brian Clarke, who is known for his work in stained glass in architectural settings, and I asked him whether he found the place daunting. "Fuck me, all I can see are the possibilities!" he replied. "I keep seeing things that give me ideas—and that can't be a bad thing. Christ, can you imagine what Calder would do with this space?"

That evening, Hadid was back at the MAXXI for a two-hundred-person dinner in her honor, served in the ground-floor gallery. She had received so many accolades throughout the day that she was on autopilot. ("Thank you," she replied, when I said hello.) She had on her most dramatic cape yet—a quilted Junya Watanabe number with golden chains around the back and a bulbous hood. The look was somewhere between Queen Elizabeth and queen bee. The hivelike atrium buzzed with air kisses.

I met one of the contractors, Emiliano Cerasi, who, when I asked him what it had been like to work on the MAXXI, rolled his eyes and put his hands together fervently, and said, "Very *dee-fee-cult*." The self-compacting concrete works best when poured at temperatures between fifteen and twenty-five degrees centigrade, he said, which in Rome means only six months a year.

Hadid processed slowly up to the cantilevered trapezoidal gallery on the top floor. She sat in an acutely angled corner next to Her Royal Highness the Princess Wijdan Ali of Jordan, while her brother Foulath and her nephew, Hussein, and Lord Palumbo and his wife, Hayat, formed a barrier around her. For ten minutes or so, Hadid managed to turn a corner of her new space into the Baghdad living room of her youth. The sound of Arabic came from within the inner circle. But the eager well-wishers wouldn't be denied, and pressed forward though the barrier. Hadid was soon surrounded, and only the glowing orange whoosh in her hair could be seen through the crowd. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Slide show: Zaha Hadid's MAXXI building.

GREETINGS, FRIENDS!

BY ROGER ANGELL

Good neighbors, hi—but O.M.G.,
The time's at hand again, I see,
To cobble up these Christmas lieder,
Fit for friend or distant reader.
Our deadline's near, so off we go,
Ignoring tweets and vertigo,
Counting beats and storing linage,
Melding Keats and major signage:
Names and rhymes and scenes of winter,
Parties, Magi—hit the printer!
God Jul, old friends, let gladness reign
O'er Sean Penn, then Dennis Lehane;
And season's joy sift slowly down
On Agyness Deyn and Tina Brown,
Jay-Z, Kobe, Simon Schama,
But first of all on Prez Obama:
Hail to the chief, our frequent flyer!
Wassail from this creaky crier—
The same, along with love and kisses,
To Michelle and two First Misses.
Yo, Clive Owen! Yay, Jane Brody!
Happy days, Diablo Cody!
V. S. Naipaul, Rafa Nadal,
We hug you one and each, et al.;
Rory Stewart, Nico Muhly,
We admire you more than duly.
Let's carve a niche within these lines
For Mary Karr and Razor Shines,
And scope out Yuley tropes to match
Lady Gaga and Orrin Hatch.
Now choirs of angels wait upon
The Mets' own Gary, Keith, and Ron;
And lay a lissome roundelay
On Peter Gelb and Tyson Gay,
Yuja Wang, Stephenie Meyer,
Michelle Wie, and Pico Iyer.
By bike or sleigh or Segway borne,
We'll tour the 'hood this Christmas morn
And, lightly latte'd, press a call
To wake up Maggie Gyllenhaal.
With Tom DeLay we'll drop a gift
Chez Taylor Branch and Taylor Swift,
And say hello, as is our habit,
To Tim Tebow and Milton Babbitt;
We'll hang these greens beside the doors
Of Wyclef Jean and Michael Kors,
Then bunch up hay and pachysandra
As lunch for Rachel Alexandra.
Then it's on to glögg with Robert Pinsky,
Sarah Smith, Mika Brzezinski,
And hotties ever on the scene
Like Susan Rice and Billy Beane.
Bring bijoux, Santa, if you can
For Mary D. and Steely Dan,
And pleasant toys or duds as well
To buoy Zooey Deschanel,
And action games to seize Prince Andrew,
Paolo Szot, and Mary Landrieu,
Adding stops along your circuit
To please the likes of Brian Urquhart,
Wanda Sykes, William H. Macy,
Robert Gates, and Lorraine Gracie.
This New Year's, dears, to beat the blues,
We've booked a tiny guilt-free cruise:
In distant parts like cool St. Bart's
We'll bare our bods and warm our hearts;
At Zürs or Vail we'll slip downtrail
Betwixt Drew Brees and Milky Quayle;
With Susan Boyle, the startled diva,
We'll tan at Sanibel Captiva,
Or linger in Himal'yan shadow
With Sergey Brin and Rachel Maddow;
Or, saving bucks, just grab a chair
Downstairs from here, in drab Times Square.
But sooner, friends, and by your leave
You'll find us home this Christmas Eve,
While kids and neighbors raise the fir
And pleasing meetings reoccur.
Look, there's Frank and Carla Bruni,
Joe Girardi (not in uni),
With Ethan Canin, midst the crush,
Beside Claire Danes and Geoffrey Rush.
Chamique Holdsclaw! Eric Holder!
We've got some Mumm's that's growing colder,
And now there's dancing—come and choose
Bo or Björk, Penélope Cruz,
Anna Paquin, Renzo Piano,
Or Janet Napolitano:
We'll glide about till dawn comes by,
With Johnny Depp, Anita Desai,
Donald Hall, Beverly D'Anne, and
The Dalton Teachers Marching Band!

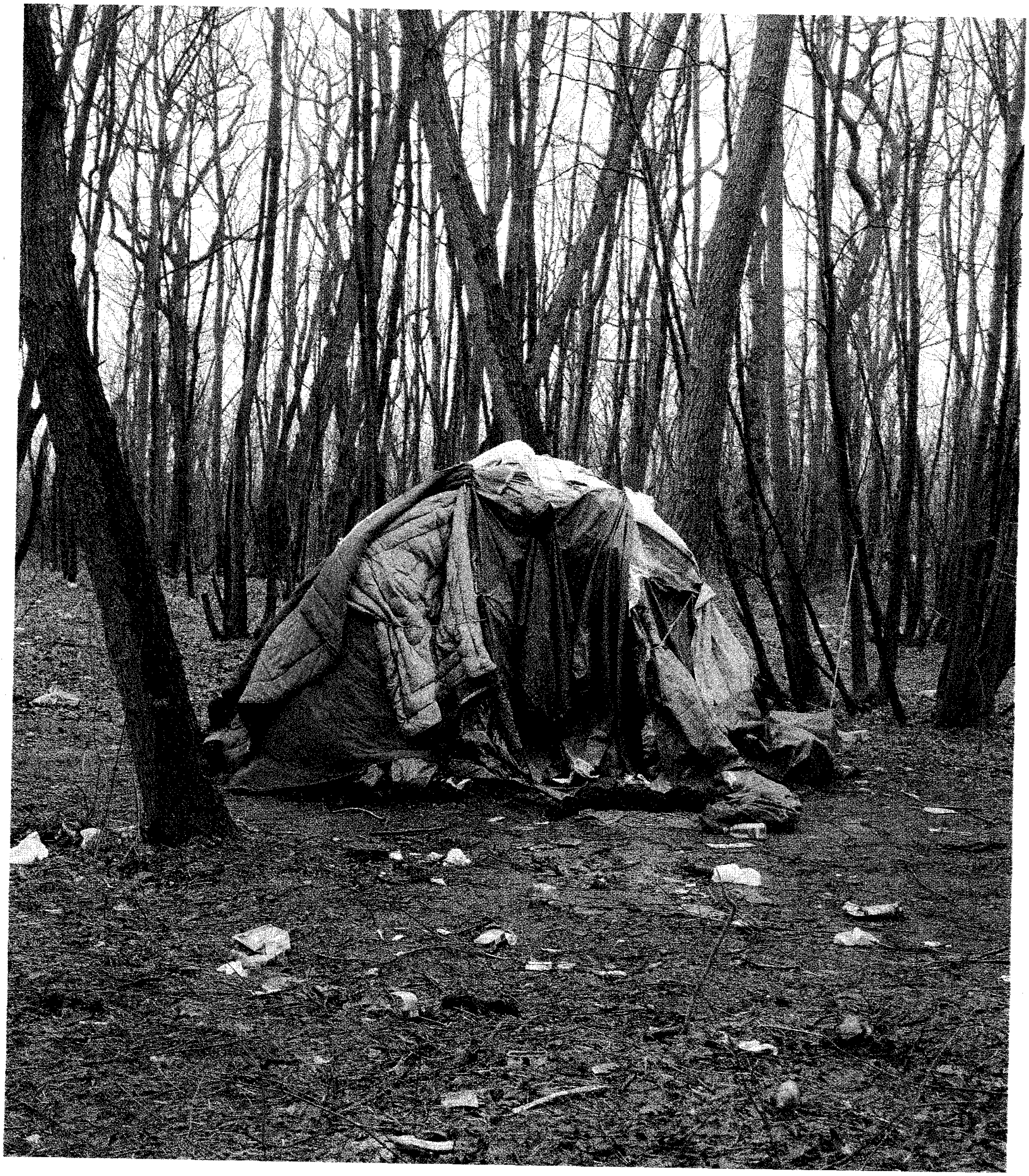
This rhyme's run dry, our end is near;
We'll see you guys same time next year,
With these weary thoughts refitted
And names of friends so far omitted.
A happy new year, if you can,
And if not, then just stick to plan;
Christmas lifts us by design,
And peace on earth's the bottom line.

ARNIE LEVIN

FICTION

DIARY OF AN INTERESTING YEAR

BY HELEN SIMPSON



February 12, 2040. My thirtieth birthday. G. gave me this little spiral-bound notebook and a Biro. It's a good present, hardly any rust on the spiral and no water damage to the paper. I'm going to start a diary. I'll keep my handwriting tiny to make the paper go further.

February 15th. G. is really getting me down. He's in his element. They should carve it on his tombstone: "I Was Right."

February 23rd. Glad we don't live in London. The Hatchwells have got cousins staying with them—they trekked up from Peckham (three days). Went round this afternoon and the cousins were saying the thing that finally drove them out was the sewage system—when the drains backed up, it overflowed everywhere. They said the smell was unbelievable. The pavements were swimming in it, and of course the hospitals are down, so there's nothing to be done about the cholera. Didn't get too close to them in case they were carrying it. They lost their two sons like that last year.

"You see," G. said to me on the way home, "capitalism cared more about its children as accessories and demonstrations of earning power than for their future."

"Oh, shut up," I said.

March 2nd. Can't sleep. I'm writing this instead of staring at the ceiling. There's a mosquito in the room, I can hear it whining close to my ear. Very humid, air like filthy soup, plus we're supposed to wear our face masks in bed, too, but I was running with sweat, so I ripped mine off just now. Got up and looked at myself in the mirror on the landing—ribs like a fence, hair in greasy rats' tails. Yesterday the rats in the kitchen were busy gnawing away at the bread bin, they didn't even look up when I came in.

March 6th. Another quarrel with G. O.K., yes, he was right, but why crow about it? That's what you get when you marry your tutor from Uni—wall-to-wall pontificating from an older man. "I saw it coming, any fool could see it coming, especially after the Big Melt," he brags. "Thresholds crossed, cascade effect, hopelessly optimistic to assume we had till 2060, blahdy blahdy blah, the plutonomy as lemming, democracy's massive own goal." No wonder we haven't got any friends.

He cheered when rationing came in. He's the one who volunteered first as car-share warden for our road; one piddling little Peugeot for the entire road. He gets a real kick out of the camaraderie round the standpipe.

—I'll swap my big tin of chickpeas for your little tin of sardines.

—No, no, my sardines are protein.

—Chickpeas are protein, too, plus they fill you up more. Anyway, I thought you still had some tuna.

—No, I swapped that with Violet Huggins for a tin of tomato soup.

Really sick of bartering, but hard to know how to earn money since the Internet went down. "Also, money's no use unless you've got shedloads of it," as I said to him in bed last night. "The top layer hanging on inside their plastic bubbles of filtered air while the rest of us shuffle about with goiters and tumors and bits of old sheet tied over our mouths. Plus, we're soaking wet the whole time. We've given up on umbrellas, we just go round permanently drenched." I stopped ranting only when I heard a snore and clocked that he was asleep.

April 8th. Boring morning washing out rags. No wood for hot water, so had to use ashes and lye again. Hands very sore, even though I put plastic bags over them. Did the face masks first, then the rags from my period. Took forever. At least I haven't got to do nappies, like Lexi or Esmé—that would send me right over the edge.

April 27th. Just back from Maia's. Seven months. She's very frightened. I don't blame her. She tried to make me promise I'd take care of the baby if anything happens to her. I havered (mostly at the thought of coming between her and that throwback Martin—she had a new black eye, I didn't ask). I suppose there's no harm in promising if it makes her feel better. After all, it wouldn't exactly be taking on a responsibility—I give a new baby three months max in these conditions. Diarrhea, basically.

May 14th. Can't sleep. Bites itching, trying not to scratch. Heavy thumps and squeaks just above, in the ceiling. Think of something nice. Soap and hot water. Fresh air. Condoms! Sick of being permanently on knife edge re pregnancy.

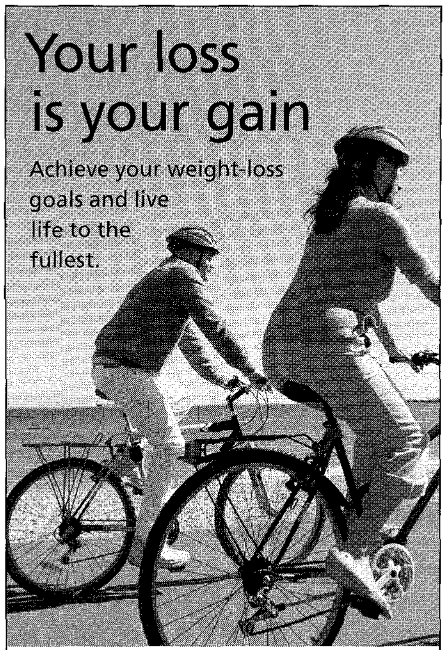
Start again. Wandering round a supermarket—warm, gorgeously lit—corridors of open fridges full of tiger prawns and fillet steak. Gliding off down the fast lane in a sports car, stopping to fill up with thirty litres of petrol. Online, booking tickets for "The Mousetrap," *click*, ordering a crate of wine, *click*, a vacation home, *click*, a pair of patent-leather boots, *click*, a gap year, *click*. I go to iTunes and download "The Marriage of Figaro," then I chat face to face in real time with G.'s parents in Sydney. No, don't think about what happened to them. Horrible. Go to sleep.

May 21st. Another row with G. He blew my second candle out, he said one was enough. It wasn't, though. I couldn't see to read anymore. He drives me mad—it's like living with a policeman. It always was, even before the Collapse. "The earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed" was his favorite. Nobody likes being labelled greedy. I called him Killjoy and he didn't like that. "Every one of us takes about twenty-five thousand breaths a day," he told me. "Each breath removes oxygen from the atmosphere and replaces it with carbon dioxide." Well, pardon me for breathing! What was I supposed to do—turn into a tree?

June 6th. Went round to the Lumleys' for the news last night. Whole road there squashed into front room, straining to listen to radio—batteries very low (no new ones in the last government delivery). Big news, though: compulsory billeting imminent. The Shorthouses were up in arms, Kai shouting and red in the face, Lexi in tears. "You work all your life," etc., etc. What planet is he on? None of us too keen, but nothing to be done about it. When we got back, G. checked our stash of tins under the bedroom floorboards. A big rat shot out and I screamed my head off. G. held me till I stopped crying, then we had sex. Woke in the night and prayed not to be pregnant, though God knows who I was praying to.

June 12th. Visited Maia this afternoon. She was in bed, her legs have swollen up

HENK WILDSCHUT, "CALAIS, FRANCE, FEB. 2006"



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like balloons. On at me again to promise about the baby, and this time I said yes. She said Violet Huggins was going to help her when it started—Violet was a nurse once, apparently, not really the hands-on sort but better than nothing. Nobody else on the road will have a clue what to do now that we can't Google it. "All I remember from old films is that you're supposed to boil a kettle," I said. We started to laugh, we got a bit hysterical. Knuckle-dragger Martin put his head round the door and growled at us to shut up.

July 1st. First billet arrived today by Army truck. We've got a Spanish group of eight, including one old lady, her daughter, and twin toddler grandsons (all pretty feral), plus four unsmiling men of fighting age. A bit much, since we have only two bedrooms. G. and I tried to show them round but they ignored us. The grandmother bagged our bedroom straight off. We're under the kitchen table tonight. I might try to sleep on top of it because of the rats. We couldn't think of anything to say—the only Spanish we could remember was *"Muchas gracias,"* and, as G. snapped, we're certainly not saying that.

July 2nd. Fell off the table in my sleep. Bashed my elbow. Covered in bruises.

July 3rd. G. depressed. The four Spaniards are bigger than him, and he's worried that the biggest one, Miguel, has his eye on me (with reason, I have to say).

July 4th. G. depressed. The grandmother found our tins under the floorboards and all but danced a flamenco. Miguel punched G. when he tried to reclaim a tin of sardines and since then his nose won't stop bleeding.

July 6th. Last night under the table G. came up with a plan. He thinks we should head north. Now that this lot are in the flat and a new group from Tehran promised next week, we might as well cut and run. Scotland's heaving—everyone else has already had the same idea—so he thinks we should get on one of the ferries to Stavanger, then aim for Russia.

"I don't know," I said. "Where would we stay?"

"I've got the pop-up tent packed in a rucksack behind the shed," he said. "Plus our sleeping bags and my windup radio."

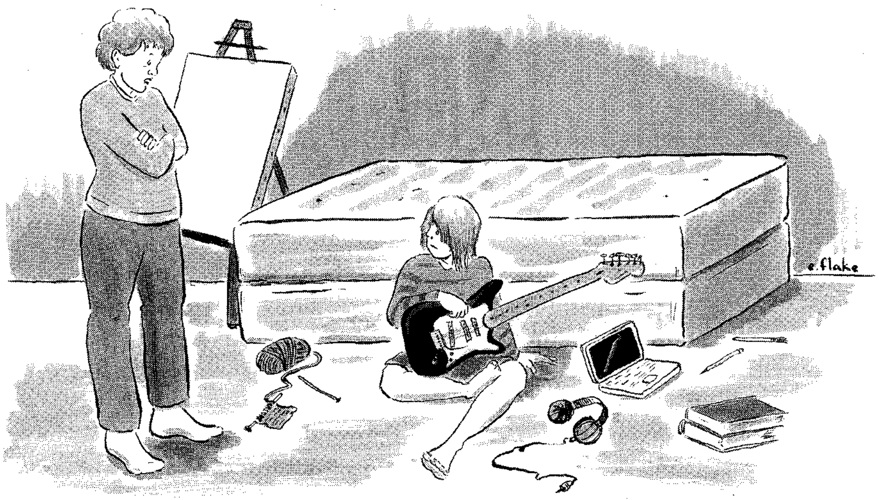
"Camping in the mud," I said.

"Look on the bright side," he said. "We have a huge mortgage and we're just going to walk away from it."

"Oh, shut up," I said.

July 17th. Maia died yesterday. It was horrible. The baby got stuck two weeks ago, it died inside her. Violet Huggins was useless, she didn't have a clue. Martin started waving his Swiss Army knife around on the second day and yelling about a Cesarean—he had to be dragged off her. He's round at ours now drinking the last of our precious brandy with the Spaniards. That's it. We've got to go. Now, says G. Yes.

August 1st. Somewhere in Shropshire, or possibly Cheshire. We're staying off the



"Maybe if your creativity had fewer outlets, it would come out of you with more force."

beaten track. Heavy rain. This notebook's pages have gone all wavy. At least Biro doesn't run. I'm lying inside the tent now. G. is out foraging. We got away in the middle of the night. G. slung our two rucksacks across the bike. We took turns wheeling it, then on the fourth morning we woke up and looked outside the tent flap and it was gone, even though we'd covered it with leaves the night before.

"Could be worse," G. said. "We could have had our throats cut while we slept."

"Oh, shut up," I said.

August 3rd. Rivers and streams all toxic—fertilizers, typhoid, etc. So we're following G.'s D.I.Y. system. Dip billycan into stream or river. Add three drops of bleach. Boil up on camping stove with T-shirt stretched over billycan. Only moisture squeezed from the T-shirt is safe to drink; nothing else. "You're joking," I said, when G. first showed me how to do this. But no.

August 9th. Radio news in muddy sleeping bags—skeleton government obviously struggling, they keep playing the "Enigma Variations." Last night they announced the end of fuel for civilian use and the compulsory disabling of all remaining civilian cars. From now on we must all stay at home, they said, and not travel without permission. There's talk of martial law. We're going cross-country as much as possible—less chance of being arrested or mugged—trying to cover ten miles a day, but the weather slows us down. Torrential rain, often horizontal in gusting winds.

August 16th. Rare dry afternoon. Black lace clouds over yellow sky. Brown grass, frowsty gray mold, fungal frills. Dead trees come crashing down without warning—one nearly got us today, it made us jump. G. was hoping we'd find stuff growing in the fields, but all the farmland round here is surrounded by razor wire and armed guards. He says he knows how to grow vegetables from his gardening days, but so what. They take too long. We're hungry now—we can't wait till March for some old carrots to get ripe.

August 22nd. G. broke a front crown cracking a beechnut, there's a black hole and he whistles when he talks. "Dam-

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LISTENING TO RICHTER

I'm cooking pasta and listening
to Richter playing Brahms's Second Piano Concerto.
My wife is watching television in the other room.
It's Johnny Depp, she calls out. Did he make a vampire movie?
Richter's piano teacher likened him to an eagle.
He flies at great heights, he said, *and so can see the landscape*
of music in all its vastness. Yet he has an unerring eye
for each and every detail. Oh! she calls again. There's
Gregory Peck! He looks like Abraham Lincoln.
How come he's in a boat?

—*Jonathan Aaron*

sons, blackberries, young green nettles for soup," he said at the start of all this, smacking his lips. He's not so keen now. No damsons or blackberries, of course—only chickweed and ivy.

He's just caught a lame squirrel, so I suppose I'll have to do something with it. No creatures left except squirrels, rats, and pigeons, unless you count the insects. The news says they're full of protein—you're meant to grind them into a paste—but so far we haven't been able to face that.

August 24th. We met a pig this morning. It was a bit thin for a pig, and it didn't look well. G. said, "Quick! We've got to kill it."

"Why?" I said. "How?"

"With a knife," he said. "Bacon. Sausages."

I pointed out that even if we managed to stab it to death with our old kitchen knife, which seemed unlikely, we wouldn't be able just to open it up and find bacon and sausages inside.

"Milk, then!" G. said wildly. "It's a mammal, isn't it?"

Meanwhile, the pig walked off.

August 25th. Ravenous. We've both got streaming colds. Jumping with fleas, itching like crazy. Weeping sores on hands and faces—unfortunate side effects from cloud seeding, the news says. What with all this and his toothache (back molar, swollen jaw) and the malaria, G. is in a bad way.

August 27th. Found a dead hedgehog. Tried to peel off its spines and barbecue it over the last briquette. Disgusting. Both sick as dogs. Why did I moan about the barter system? Foraging is MUCH MUCH worse.

August 29th. Dreamed of Maia and the Swiss Army knife and woke up crying. G. held me in his shaky arms and talked about Russia, how it's the new land of milk and honey since the Big Melt. "Some really good farming opportunities opening up in Siberia," he said through chattering teeth. "We're like in 'Three Sisters,' " I said. " 'If only we could get to Moscow.' Do you remember that production at the National? We walked by the river afterward, we stood and listened to Big Ben chime midnight." Hugged each other and carried on like this until sleep came.

August 31st. G. woke up crying. I held him and hushed him and asked what was the matter. "I wish I had a gun," he said.

September 15th. Can't believe this notebook was still at the bottom of the rucksack. And the Biro. Murderer wasn't interested in them. He's turned everything else inside out (including me). G. didn't have a gun. This one has a gun.

September 19th. M. speaks another language. Norwegian? Dutch? Croatian? We can't talk, so he hits me instead. He smells like an abandoned fridge, his breath stinks of rot. What he does to me is horrible. I don't want to think about it. I won't think about it. There's a tent and cooking stuff on the ground, but half the time we're up a tree with

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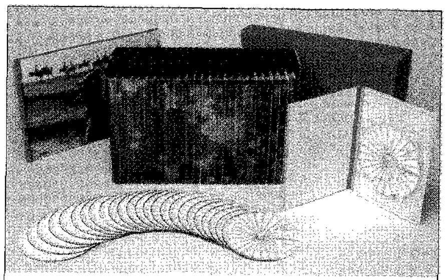

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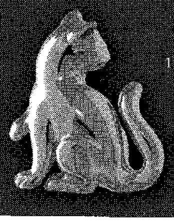

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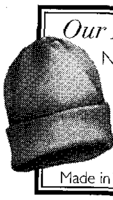

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the gun. There's a big plank platform and a tarpaulin roped to the branches above. At night he pulls the rope ladder up after us. It's quite high—you can see for miles. He uses the platform for storing stuff he brings back from his mugging expeditions. I'm surrounded by tins of baked beans.

October 3rd. M. can't seem to get through the day without at least two blow jobs. I'm always sick afterward (sometimes during).

October 8th. M. beat me up yesterday. I'd tried to escape. I shan't do that again, he's too fast.

October 14th. If we run out of beans I think he might kill me for food. There were warnings about it on the news a while back. This one wouldn't think twice. I'm just meat on legs to him. He bit me all over last night, hard. I'm covered in bite marks. I was literally licking my wounds afterward when I remembered how nice the taste of blood is, how I miss it. Strength. Calves' liver for iron. How I haven't had a period for ages. When that thought popped out I missed a beat. Then my blood ran cold.

October 15th. Wasn't it juniper berries they used to use? As in gin? Even if it was, I wouldn't know what they looked like—I remember only mint and basil. I can't be pregnant. I won't be pregnant.

October 17th. Very sick after drinking rank juice off random stewed herbs. Nothing else, though, worse luck.

October 20th. Can't sleep. Dreamed of G. I was moving against him, it started to go up a little way, so I thought he wasn't really dead. Dreadful waking to find M. there instead.

October 23rd. Can't sleep. Very bruised and scratched after today. They used to throw themselves downstairs to get rid of it. The trouble is the gravel pit just wasn't deep enough, plus the bramble bushes kept breaking my fall. There was some sort of body down there, too, seething with white vermin. Maybe it was a goat or a pig or something, but I don't think it was. I keep thinking it might have been G.

October 31st. This baby will be the death of me. Would have been. Let's make that a subjunctive. "Would have been," not "will."

November 7th. It's all over. I'm still here. Too tired to

November 8th. Slept for hours. Stronger. I've got all the food and drink, and the gun. There's still some shouting from down there but it's weaker now. I think he's almost finished.

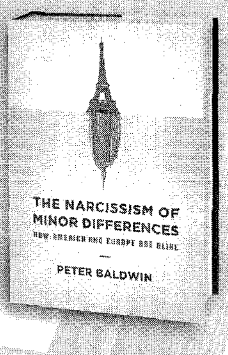
November 9th. Slept for hours. Fever gone. Baked beans for breakfast. More groans started up just now. Never mind. I can wait.

November 10th. It's over. I got stuck into his bottle of vodka—it was the demon drink that saved me. He was out mugging—left me up the tree as usual—I drank just enough to raise my courage. Nothing else had worked, so I thought I'd get him to beat me up. When he came back and saw me waving the bottle he was beside himself. I pretended to be drunker than I was and I lay down on the wooden platform with my arms round my head while he got the boot in. It worked. Not right away but that night.

Meanwhile, M. decided he fancied a drink himself, and very soon he'd polished off the rest of it—more than three-quarters of a bottle. He was singing and sobbing and carrying on, out of his tree with alcohol, and then, when he was standing pissing off the side of the platform, I crept along and gave him a gigantic shove and he really was out of his tree. Crash.

November 13th. I've wrapped your remains in my good blue shirt; sorry I couldn't let you stay on board, but there's no future now for any baby aboveground. I'm the end of the line!

This is the last page of my thirtieth-birthday present. When I've finished it I'll wrap the notebook up in six plastic bags, sealing each one with duct tape against the rain, then I'll bury it in a hole on top of the blue shirt. I don't know why, as I'm not mad enough to think anybody will ever read it. After that I'm going to buckle on this rucksack of provisions and head north with my gun. Wish me luck. Last line: Good luck, good luck, good luck, good luck, good luck. ♦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PETER BALDWIN

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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

ROAD WARRIOR

Arthur Koestler and his century.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Arthur Koestler was arrested by Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces in the city of Málaga on February 9, 1937. Koestler had come to Spain, in the midst of the Civil War, as a correspondent for a British paper called the *News Chronicle*, and although Málaga had been abandoned by Republican troops and most of its inhabitants several days earlier, and although the reporters Koestler was travelling with had fled, he had stayed behind. Why is not clear. Michael Scammell, in his compendious new biography, "Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic" (Random House; $35), suggests a number of possibilities: Koestler felt loyal to the acting British consul, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, who had a house in the city and with whom he had become friendly; he was disgusted by the cowardice of the deserters and wanted to show bravery himself; he couldn't face the thought of leaving his typewriter behind; and he hoped to get a really big scoop. These motives—loyalty, courage, obsessiveness, and ambition—are all plausible, because they are all characteristic of the man.

He paid a price. The officer who arrested him, Captain Luis Bolin, had sworn, based on things that Koestler had already published about the Franco insurgency, "to shoot K. like a mad dog" if he ever got hold of him. Koestler was taken first to the Málaga jailhouse, which was crammed with prisoners picked up in the city and the surrounding villages during the Fascist advance. From his cell he could hear men being escorted outside to be shot, sometimes fifty at a time. In the week following the fall of the city, six hundred prisoners were executed. After a few days, he was transferred to Seville, to a prison that had been built by the Republican government and was now in the hands of the Nationalists.

He was placed in solitary confinement. For many weeks, he was not allowed out of his cell, a chamber six and a half paces long. He was verbally abused by the guards, ignored by the prison authorities, and led to believe that he had been sentenced to death. At night, he listened to men crying for their mothers as they were dragged out of their cells to be shot. Once, he heard a priest, accompanied by guards, going from cell to cell leading prisoners out to be executed. When they reached his door, the priest began to fumble at the bolt. "No, not this one," a guard said, and they moved on.

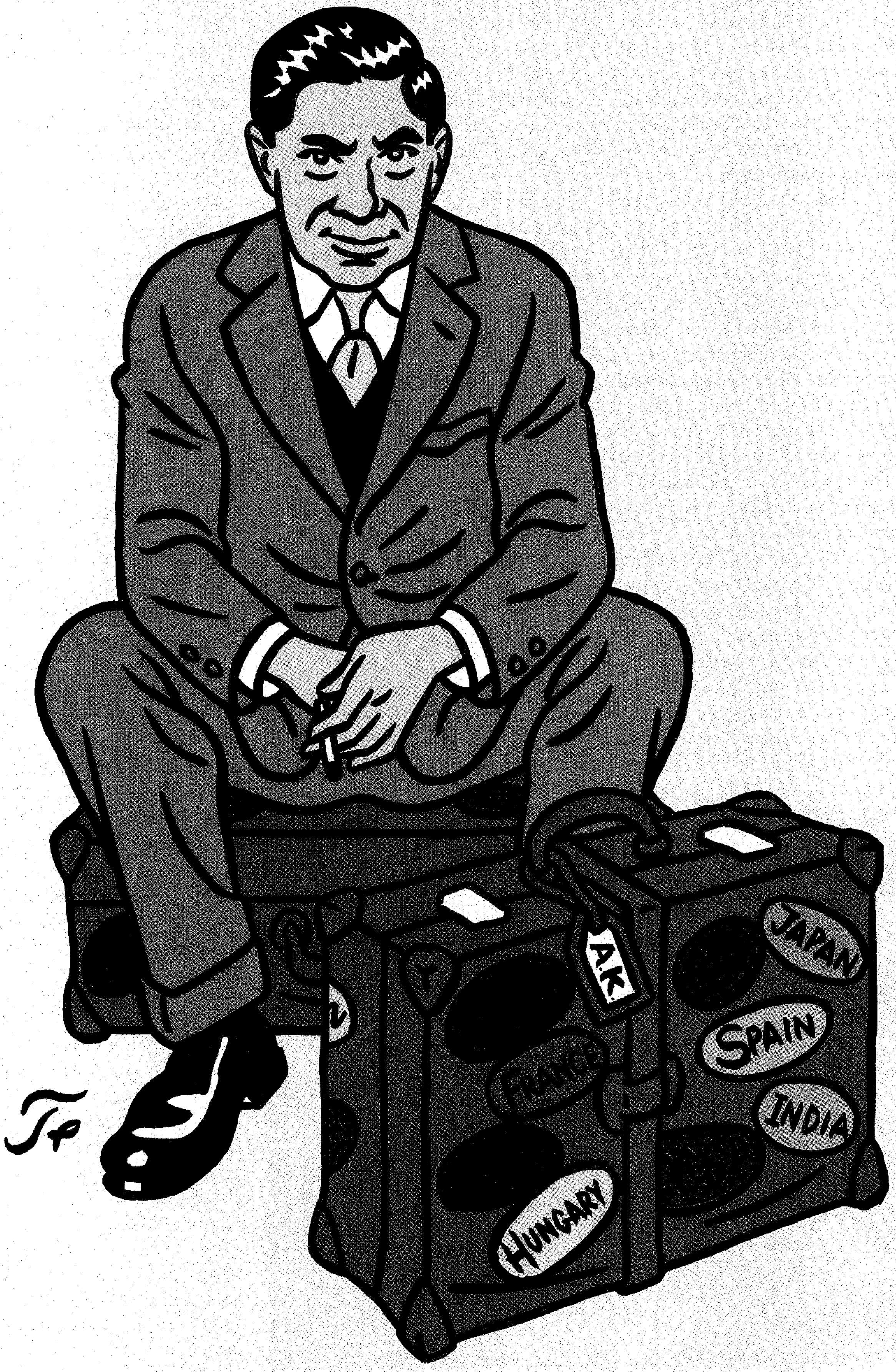
He considered suicide, and starved himself for weeks in the hope of simulating a heart condition that might get him into the prison infirmary. He eventually managed to get books from the prison library—the first one handed to him was a Spanish translation of the autobiography of John Stuart Mill—and he was allowed into the yard, where he got to know some of the other political prisoners. But he was given no reason to believe that he would be freed or that his life would be spared.

Meanwhile, Chalmers Mitchell had made his way to Gibraltar, where he telegraphed the *News Chronicle* about Koestler's imprisonment, and an international effort was begun to secure his release. William Randolph Hearst called Koestler's arrest an "unacceptable infringement of the rights of journalists to carry out their profession." The French government was urged to intervene, and Koestler's wife, Dorothee, enlisted British notables in the cause. The National Union of Journalists, in Britain, passed a resolution demanding that the British government intercede, and fifty-six Members of Parliament signed a letter in Koestler's support. Finally, following negotiations involving the League of Nations, the Red Cross, and the Vatican, a prisoner exchange was arranged. Koestler was taken to Gibraltar and remanded to the custody of British authorities on May 14th, after ninety-four days in captivity.

He returned to England to find himself famous. Three and a half years later, he published "Darkness at Noon," his classic novel about a man confined, interrogated, and executed in a Communist prison. Though the book did not do well in England, it was an enormous best-seller in the United States and, after the end of the Second World War, in France, and then around the world. It made Koestler financially secure for the rest of his life, and it has never gone out of print.

Koestler went on to publish several volumes of autobiography: "Scum of the Earth" (1941), "Arrow in the Blue" (1952), and "The Invisible Writing" (1954)—all popular successes. He produced other novels, including "The Gladiators," based on Spartacus' slave revolt (1939); "Arrival and Departure" (1943), about a young revolutionary who escapes from a Fascist prison; and "Thieves in the Night" (1946), a story set in Palestine. These books had an uneven reception. Isaiah Berlin thought "Thieves in the Night" "a detestable and vulgar book"; Clement Greenberg, in *Partisan Review*, was more critical. He was intensively involved with anti-Communist organizations after the war, notably the Congress for Cultural Freedom; but in 1955 he more or less retired from politics and began writing popular books on science, among them "The Sleepwalkers" (1959),

ABOVE: TIBOR KÁRPÁTI; OPPOSITE: FLOC'H


A.K.
JAPAN
SPAIN
INDIA
FRANCE
HUNGARY

Koestler was the prototype of the rootless cosmopolitan. The history of twentieth-century Europe made him that way.

"The Ghost in the Machine" (1967), and "The Case of the Midwife Toad" (1971).

Koestler's books explained science, but they also promoted his own views, and these inclined toward the heterodox. Among his enthusiasms were the Lamarckian theory of evolution (the belief that acquired characteristics can be inherited), extrasensory perception, levitation (he bought a sophisticated weighing machine for performing experiments), the cosmic significance of coincidences, and Eastern spiritual teachings, which he believed in theoretically but which he found, upon contact, somewhat alien to his temperament.

In 1976, he published "The Thirteenth Tribe," a book purporting to prove that Ashkenazi Jews are descendants of eighth-century converts, the Khazars, who immigrated to Europe from the Caucasus. The book was a best-seller in the United States. Koestler, who was Jewish, claimed that his argument refuted anti-Semitism by showing that European Jews were not related to the Jews whom some anti-Semites blame for the killing of Christ. But the book was popular with Arabs, since it implied that European Jews settling in Israel were returning to the wrong homeland, and with neo-Nazis, since it suggested that Diaspora Jews constituted a pseudo nation constructed on a racial myth, and that Jews should either immigrate to Israel or assimilate—which is, in fact, what Koestler himself believed.

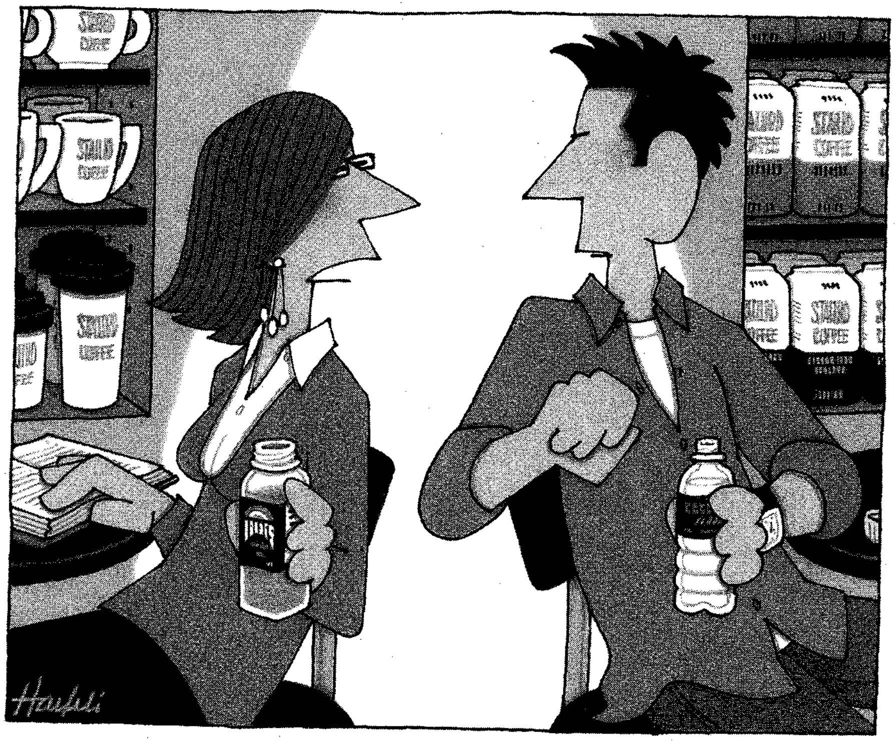
In 1983, afflicted with Parkinson's disease and chronic lymphatic leukemia, Koestler committed suicide by taking an overdose of barbiturates with alcohol. His third wife, Cynthia, killed herself alongside him; she was fifty-five, and in good health. Koestler left virtually his entire estate, four hundred thousand pounds, to fund an academic chair in parapsychology, and there is today a Koestler Parapsychology Unit in the psychology department at the University of Edinburgh. Its Web site announces the recent award of a grant to study "alleged poltergeist experiences."

Covering this multifarious body of work—more than thirty books and hundreds of articles, many highly fugitive, in all sorts of papers and journals—is actually the easier part of a biographer's task. The hard part is keeping up with the subject himself. Koestler was the prototype of the rootless cosmopolitan. History made him that way. He was born in Budapest in 1905, but his family fled when the short-lived Communist government fell, in 1919. They moved to Vienna (Koestler's mother was from a prominent Austrian Jewish family), where Koestler attended the Technische Hochschule. In 1925, after his father's business collapsed, he was expelled for nonpayment of fees. He had been involved in Zionist organizations in Vienna, and he moved to Palestine, where he began his career as a journalist.

After several years spent travelling around the Middle East as a reporter, he worked for a year in Paris, then moved to Berlin. He arrived on September 14, 1930, the same day the National Socialist Party made its great gains in the Reichstag elections. He became the science editor at a major newspaper in Berlin. He was let go, for reasons that are unclear, in 1932, and he travelled through the Soviet Union, working on a book, and visited many of the republics, including Turkmenistan, in Central Asia. By the end of the trip, it was not safe to return to Germany, so he moved to Paris, which is where he met his first wife. He was living in Paris when he embarked on his Spanish adventure. Later on, he lived in France, Great Britain, and the United States, where he owned a farmhouse in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He travelled, in search of esoteric wisdom, to India and Japan. He even took a trip, as a reporter on the Graf Zeppelin, in 1931, to the North Pole.

Koestler wrote in German (the original language of "Darkness at Noon") and English. He spoke Hungarian, Russian, Spanish, and French, too. (Hebrew gave him trouble; characteristically, he blamed the language.) He was, in his own phrase, the "Casanova of causes," from Zionism to the campaign against capital punishment, and he donated generously to many of them. He maintained lifelong relationships (including the occasional feud) with the writers, scientists, and political activists he met in the various places he visited. And he was a social and sexual torpedo. Academics generally avoided him, but he socialized and debated—alcohol, generously administered, was a necessary lubricant and invariably made him obstreperous and sometimes violent—with nearly everyone else in midcentury intellectual circles, from George Orwell and Jean-Paul Sartre to Whittaker Chambers and Timothy Leary. He was married three times, and he had literally hundreds of affairs. He was the sort of person who records his liaisons in a notebook.

Scammell would therefore be entirely justified if he felt (a) proud and (b) exhausted after completing his biographical task, which has taken him, he says, to fourteen countries on three continents



"Thanks, but I'm in the midst of a lesbian phase that started the day I was born."

over a span of twenty years. (Scammell's previous book, a prize-winning biography of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was published in 1984.) Just getting the file cards in order would have challenged Hercules, if Hercules had been literate. Other reviewers may second-guess Scammell's take on, say, Zionist fraternities in interwar Vienna, but not this one. "Koestler" seems a prodigy of research, in many languages, and a scrupulous piece of fair-minded advocacy.

Still, there are challenges that even Hercules—even a learned and polyglot Hercules—might not have met with complete success. From 1914 until the Cold War froze the world temporarily into position, Europe was, politically, economically, and intellectually, a continent in extremis. It was not just a volatile and combustible place; it was an extremely dangerous place. For Koestler, violent political sectarianism was not a noisy backdrop to his books. It was the world in which he worked and risked his life.

He was a person who, in the course of his career, managed to attract the interest of the Gestapo, the Sûreté Nationale, M.I.5, and almost certainly the N.K.V.D. (He also had relations with the C.I.A., but these were mainly friendly.) He was imprisoned in three countries. He was living in France when the Second World War began, and in October, 1939, was arrested and placed in an internment camp, from which he was eventually released. When Hitler invaded France, in 1940, he was arrested again, only barely managing to escape to England. (In Marseilles, he encountered his friend Walter Benjamin, who gave him half of his morphine tablets, the pills that Benjamin used shortly afterward to kill himself.) When "Darkness at Noon" was published, that December, Koestler was in solitary confinement, as an undesirable alien, in a British jail. Arrogant as he could be about it, and annoying as it might be to people like Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who, even during the Occupation, led fairly cautious and secure lives, Koestler truly possessed street cred.

To capture Koestler biographically, therefore, you need to capture all of this (plus what was going on in Moscow under Stalin and in Palestine under the British Mandate)—not only the multitude of personalities and the internecine details of organizational intrigue, which crowd the pages of this book, and with which Scammell is admirably methodical, but also the sense of history being made, the moral and ideological weather, the existential stakes. There are two difficulties. The first is simply the demands that the material places on narrative technique. Scammell is a clear writer, but he is not a dramatic one. Koestler was, preëminently, both—and that is the second difficulty. The best biographer of the first half, the adventurous half, of Koestler's life is Koestler, which means that Scammell is often in the unhappy position of describing events that Koestler himself has already written about brilliantly and grippingly.

One of Koestler's finest books, for example, is the account of his Spanish imprisonment, "Dialogue with Death," published in England in 1942. The book is not really about politics. Koestler despised the Fascists, but he saw little to respect in the Republicans, either. The book is about what it is like to face one's imminent execution—it was admired by Sartre, among others, as a lucid statement of the existentialist situation—and, in this respect, it is a stranger and stronger book than "Darkness at Noon."

Koestler's Spanish experiences obviously informed "Darkness at Noon," but the novel has more to do with the fatal self-deceptions of Communist dialectics than it does with the sheer apprehension of death. And "Darkness at Noon" is a *roman à thèse*, in which every character is a type—the disillusioned old revolutionary, the soulless apparatchik, the doomed idealist. "Dialogue with Death" is just a report on a series of mostly horrible events, and the author is under no obligation to organize them, or even to make sense of them.

So a great deal of the accidental and absurd in life gets represented in the book—though, since it is life under immense pressure, the results are sometimes tragic or grotesque. One of the prison orderlies, Manuel, whom Koestler describes as "a little degenerate cripple," rumored to have been sentenced to life for "some sexual offense that had had a fatal outcome," is on duty with a particularly sadistic warder whom Koestler calls "Captain Bligh":

> At half-past ten I heard subdued whispering, tittering, and very odd snuffling and smacking noises in the corridor.
>
> I looked through the spy-hole.
>
> In the empty, lighted corridor a scene was

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> being enacted, strange as a hallucination: little Manuel and Captain Bligh were playing at "horses." Manuel was the horse, and had a string tied round him; Captain Bligh was holding the reins. They paraded like this up and down the whole length of the corridor; I could see them whenever they passed the line of vision of my spy-hole. The warder was holding a whip, he called out, "Gee up!" at every step and laid on with it. Manuel tittered, and whimpered with pain by turns. After having traversed the corridor three times, horse and driver went out into the empty patio. I could hear the crack of the whip and Manuel's whimpers. Then they came back.
>
> This was about eleven. Then I fell asleep. Next day I heard that three prisoners had been executed shortly after midnight.

And there is the night during Koestler's stay in the Málaga slaughterhouse when he wakes up and hears a prisoner singing the "Internationale":

> I had read descriptions of German prisons and concentration camps. The singing of the "International" as a political protest or as a last demonstration was frequently mentioned in them; but despite my profound respect for the German martyrs, such passages had always struck me as a little melodramatic and implausible. Now I myself was hearing a man who knew that he was going to die singing the "International." It was not melodramatic at all; the hoarse, unmelodious voice sounded wretched and pitiable. He repeated the refrain two or three times, dragging it out to make it last longer, to delay the moment when silence would return. I got up and posted myself by the door, and, my teeth chattering, raised my fist in the salute I had learned at meetings in Valencia and Madrid. And I felt that in the adjoining cells all the others were standing at their doors like myself and solemnly raising their fists in a farewell salute.
>
> He sang. I could see him before me, with his unshaven, battered face and tortured eyes.
>
> He sang. They would hear him outside and come and tear him to pieces.
>
> He sang. It was unbearable. How we all loved him.
>
> But none of us joined in the singing—fear was too strong.

There is no good way to retell these stories.

"We were never more free than during the German occupation," Sartre wrote in 1944. The remark seems a little self-dramatizing, a little unearned. But one doesn't feel that way about the words that Koestler published two years earlier: "Often when I wake at night I am homesick for my cell in the death-house in Seville and, strangely enough, I feel that I have never been so free as I was then." When he and the other prisoners knew that they were going to die, he says, and no longer feared dying, "at such moments we were *free*—men without shadows, dismissed from the ranks of the mortal; it was the most complete experience of freedom that can be granted a man."

Still, there is some duplicity at work in "Dialogue with Death." It peeks through in the passage about the singer, in the phrase "raised my fist in the salute I had learned at meetings in Valencia and Madrid." Koestler didn't learn the "Internationale" or the raised fist in Spain, and his sense of solidarity with the condemned man was not merely fraternal. Contrary to what William Randolph Hearst and the fifty-six M.P.s may have believed, Koestler was not really a journalist. He was exactly what Franco suspected him of being: a Communist agent.

Koestler became a Communist in Berlin, in 1931, but he remained undercover, in order not to compromise his position at the newspaper, where it was felt he could be of most use to the Party. Once more, his own account of this chapter in his life is inimitable: it appears in what is, after "Darkness at Noon," probably the most widely known thing he wrote, the apologia for his Communist past in "The God That Failed" (1949)—a collection of essays by eminent former Communists, including Richard Wright and Ignazio Silone, which became a staple of Cold War literature.

Scammell does not even attempt to retell much of this episode. He has a cursory account of Koestler's assignation in the Schneidemühl paper mill with the boss of the underground Apparat N, and of his reports to the mysterious Edgar, delivered under the nom de guerre Ivan Steinberg. He passes over the story of Koestler's recruitment of von E., the son of a high-ranking diplomat, as an informant. Koestler always believed that he was fired from the newspaper because von E., panicked by his own role in passing information to a foreign power, turned him in. And one misses, too, touches such as Koestler's delightful explanation of how, in Party meetings, the problem of "the sexual urge" was solved by the operation of the dialectic, which, correctly applied, reveals that the counter-revolutionary bourgeois institution of marriage is transformed into a progressive one in a healthy proletarian society. ("Have you understood, Comrade, or shall I repeat my answer in more concrete terms?")

It was not because he was a Jew that Koestler did not return to Berlin at the end of 1933. It was because he was a Communist. The Reichstag fire, in February, 1933, for which Communist agents were blamed, led to a suspension of civil liberties (Hitler had come to power in January) and a crackdown on Communists. When he got to Paris, Koestler became an operative in the apparat of another German exile, the formidable Willi Münzenberg. It was Münzenberg's idea to send Koestler to Spain, in order to find evidence, to be used by the Party, of German and Italian support for Franco's insurgency. And it was Münzenberg who arranged, through an editor at the *News Chronicle*, also a Party member, for Koestler's press credentials, to be used as a cover.

When Koestler's wife campaigned for his release, she had both to conceal his Party affiliation and, at the same time, to fight against the Party's own preference, which was that Koestler be kept in prison as long as possible, or even executed by Franco, as a martyr to the anti-Fascist cause. Thus the somewhat incredible consequence: a novel about a Communist prison that was inspired by an experience in a Fascist prison and written by a man being held, as a suspected Communist, in a French internment camp.

"Darkness at Noon" is based on the Moscow show trials of the late nineteen-thirties. Orwell was an ardent admirer of the novel; he reviewed it when it appeared, and it was undoubtedly on his mind when he started writing "1984." Orwell's Big Brother is prefigured in Koestler's Stalin figure, called No. 1, whose picture hangs on every wall, and the interrogation scenes between Winston Smith and the Machiavellian O'Brien recall the two interrogations of Rubashov, the old Bolshevik, that structure "Darkness at Noon": with the cynical Ivanov, and then, after Ivanov himself has been executed, with the doctrinaire Gletkin, who methodically finishes the job. Like Winston's, Rubashov's last mental image, at the moment he is shot, is the face of No. 1.

It is certain that many of Stalin's victims in the show trials were physically tortured; Rubashov is not tortured. But many were broken in precisely the way Rubashov is broken in the novel, by the method known as "the conveyor"—hours of interrogation under bright lights in conditions of extreme sleep deprivation. After a week, most prisoners agreed to confess to whatever was put before them. Koestler was not interrogated in Spain, but he learned a great deal about the treatment of political prisoners in the Soviet Union from an old friend, Eva Striker.

Striker was, Scammell says, the chief cause of Koestler's "lurch to the left" in Berlin in 1931. Not long after converting Koestler to Communism, she moved to Russia to take a position as the director of design in a porcelain factory near Moscow. In 1936, she was arrested and thrown into the Lubyanka, then transferred to a prison in Leningrad, where she was placed in solitary confinement and charged with plotting to assassinate Stalin. She was abruptly released after eighteen months, when her interrogator was himself arrested and imprisoned. She met up with Koestler again in Vienna, and, as Koestler acknowledges in "The God That Failed," he used many details of her prison experience, including communication by rapping on cell walls, in "Darkness at Noon."

Koestler resigned from the Party in 1938, but the real break came for him, as it did for many Western Communists and fellow-travellers, with the Non-Aggression Pact between Hitler and Stalin, in August, 1939, the treaty that made possible Hitler's invasion of Poland. "Our feelings towards Russia were rather like those of a man who has divorced a much-beloved wife," Koestler wrote in his autobiographical account of those years, "Scum of the Earth." "He hates her and yet it is a sort of consolation for him to know that she is still there, on the same planet, still young and alive. But now she was dead."

The friend of his enemy was his enemy. "Darkness at Noon" is anti-Communist because it is also anti-Fascist. Koestler devoted the next fifteen years of his life and work, starting with the essays on the Soviet Union in "The Yogi and the Commissar" (1944), to persuading fellow-travellers like Sartre that the Gulag was real, that Soviet Communism was an economic failure, and that Stalin was evil.

As Orwell astutely noticed, in an essay on Koestler written in 1944, Koestler's rejection of Stalinism left him with no political party or platform of his own. He was anti-Communist, and he was (like Orwell) nominally a socialist, but there is a sense in which "Darkness at Noon" is a book that despairs not just of Communism but of politics. Like "1984," "Darkness at Noon" is partly a meditation on power, a meditation conducted by Rubashov mostly in his own head. The conclusion that Rubashov continually reaches seems to be that any politics, any system of governance, requires the sacrifice of a few for the sake of the many, demands the primacy of ends over means. Rubashov doesn't have an alternative political vision; he doesn't argue for democratic socialism, or for a regime of human rights. His imagined alternative is represented by vaguely spiritual and sensual things—a painting of the Pietà, the memory of a woman's body, what Koestler calls, borrowing from Freud, the "oceanic sense."

This is what Orwell was referring to when he complained, in his essay, about "a well-marked hedonistic strain" in Koestler's writings. Orwell suspected Koestler of believing that happiness is the object of life (not something that Orwell ever thought),

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and he concluded that this made him, despite his anti-totalitarianism, a utopian. Koestler admitted it. When he quit politics, he embarked on a quixotic crusade to rescue modern science from rationality and positivism, and to find, by deciphering what he called "the invisible writing" of the universe, a spiritual guide to conduct. This is what got him involved with characters like Chambers, whom he admired, and Leary, whom he came to distrust. Scammell's subtitle is inexplicable: Koestler was not a skeptic. He was a romantic, a searcher after the absolute.

One of the American intellectuals who joined Koestler in anti-Communist events sponsored by the C.I.A.-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom was the philosopher Sidney Hook. Hook admired Koestler for his views, his rhetorical skill, and his stamina. "There was, however, one aspect of his behavior," Hook wrote in his autobiography, "that I found so painful that I could hardly bear to be in the same room with him when he let himself go. This was his rude and cruel treatment of his wife, who though obviously hurt by his remarks seemed to dote on him all the more."

Scammell does not cite Hook's observation, but then he has plenty like it to choose from. The wife concerned was the former Mamaine Paget, a lovely Englishwoman whom many men found adorable. Edmund Wilson unsuccessfully proposed marriage to her (and Orwell unsuccessfully proposed marriage to her identically lovely twin sister, Celia). Though Koestler verbally and on a few occasions physically roughed up Mamaine, she was devoted to him, even after they separated, in 1952. (She died, following an asthma attack, in 1954.) Any number of women seem to have found Koestler irresistible, and many men had the same reaction that Hook did—they found the appeal mystifying.

Scammell is obliged to devote many pages to making sense of this aspect of his subject's life. After his death, Koestler was accused by one woman of rape, and though Scammell manages to throw some reasonable doubt on the charge, he does concede that Koestler's seduction methods, which he seems to have tried out on every attractive woman who crossed his path—"Like everyone who talks of ethics all day long," Cyril Connolly told Edmund Wilson, "one could not trust him half an hour with one's wife"—were based on the belief that "coercion added spice to sexual intercourse." In a letter to Mamaine after their first sexual encounter, Koestler refers, somewhat apologetically, to what he calls "an element of initial rape."

"I always picked one type," Koestler wrote in his diary after Mamaine died, "beautiful cinderellas, infantile and inhibited, prone to be subdued by bullying." This certainly describes Cynthia, his last wife, who committed suicide alongside him, and whom one of their friends described as a dogged Shetland pony. Koestler was an utter traditionalist about gender: he used his wives and mistresses as secretaries, demanded that they keep his house and cook his dinner, and, in bed, insisted (according to one unusually spunky partner) on being on top. "I said to him once: 'I want a change, I'm getting tired of being pinned down like a butterfly,'" this woman explained to Scammell. "'Ah,' he said, 'but that's what I like, pinning you down like a butterfly.'" We can get another intimate view of our subject from Beauvoir, who spent one drunken night with Koestler. She made him into a character called Scriassine in "The Mandarins," her remarkable *roman à clef* about intellectuals in Paris after the Liberation. In his sexual encounter with the narrator in that novel, he is domineering, but also desperate. The woman gets no pleasure.

Scammell suggests that standards for sexual conduct have changed since the nineteen-forties and fifties, and it may be true that fewer men today regard physical coercion as a permissible, if inelegant, romantic technique. It might also be true, though, that opportunities for women of the kind who found themselves entangled with Koestler have changed, and that women like Mamaine Paget no longer feel that succumbing to the sexual demands of famous or interesting men is the only means of entry afforded them into a life of art and ideas.

Leaving aside the psychology of the women in Koestler's life, what about the psychology of Koestler? Scammell thinks that Koestler suffered from manic depression, and he cites the symptoms listed by Kay Redfield Jamison in her book "Touched with Fire": "an inflated self-esteem, as well as a certainty of conviction about the correctness and importance of their ideas . . . chaotic patterns of personal and professional relationships . . . spending excessive amounts of money, impulsive involvements in questionable endeavors, reckless driving, extreme impatience, intense and impulsive romantic or sexual relations, and volatility." Those characterizations do fit Koestler, right down to the reckless driving, but evidence of depression, although there are plenty of self-reports, is thinner. He agonized, but every writer agonizes. If we are clinically inclined, a diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder might better meet the case (I quote from the *D.S.M.*): "a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy."

Why did Koestler renounce political activism (and, with a few exceptions, live up to that declaration) after 1955? As Scammell explains, Koestler had encountered difficulties when he came to the United States because he did not recognize the difference between left-wing anti-Communists like the editors of *Partisan Review*, to which he contributed; liberal anti-Communists like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., with whom he consorted; and right-wingers like Joseph McCarthy, with whom he also met. In the beginning, he probably didn't think American anti-Communist sectarianism was very significant. He had the view, not unreasonable, that an anti-Communist is an anti-Communist, whatever the color of his other views, and that anti-Communists ought to band together.

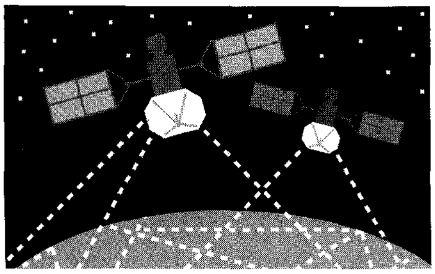
At some point, he must have realized that in a Cold War world the petty differences among European anti-Communists, a world he knew from the inside out, no longer mattered. The Americans were in charge. Events from now on would be dictated by American politics, not by the subtleties of French fellow-travelling apologetics. And so he set off after mind waves, alternative modes of consciousness, intelligent design—cosmic mysteries. He must, in the end, have been something of a mystery to himself. And, even after this exhaustive combing of the record, he remains something of a mystery to us—a slightly mad dreidel that spun out of Central Europe and across the history of a bloody century. It's a story that was worth writing and that is still worth hearing. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/GO/BOOKBENCH
Our literary bloggers look back at 2009.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Liver, *by Will Self (Bloomsbury; $26).* In this collection of glancingly connected stories, the body's largest internal organ comes under repeated assault: from alcohol, at a derelict private drinking club in London; from cancer and hepatitis C, the latter doing a star turn as a first-person narrator, gleefully chronicling its multiplication in a heroin addict's blood; and from a griffon vulture, which feasts on the liver of an ambitious copywriter (named Prometheus, natch) with kimono-cuffed suits and "Pantone 293 eyes." Ecstatically evoking miasma, Self's prose is feral in pace, always zeroing in for the kill: ad men are "coddled by a warm albumen of piped-in pop culture"; a woman, after a bout of joyless sex at a hotel, confronts "the pathos of the hand towels." But the characters, pruned of any redeeming virtue, are difficult to like, and too often the cup of bile runs over.

The Glass Room, *by Simon Mawer (Other Press; $14.95).* In this stirring historical novel, shortlisted for the 2009 Man Booker Prize, Viktor and Liesel Landauer commission a house in Czechoslovakia that is to embody the rational spirit of nineteen-twenties Europe: the Landauer House, with the transparent Glass Room as its center. In the room, "there is nothing convolute, involute, awkward, or complex. Here everything can be understood as a matter of proportion and dimension." But, as a new decade sees Europe dissolving into irrationality, the Glass Room begins "percolating the human beings who stand within it, rendering them as translucent as the glass itself." Once devotees of reason and modernity, the Landauers find that there is no straight line in human emotion, and the room becomes a theatre in which the actors are ruled by passions they don't completely understand.



City Boy, *by Edmund White (Bloomsbury; $26).* White's second volume of memoirs covers the sixties and seventies, when living in New York was "something like a religious vocation, full of obvious penances and rarefied rewards." White relished the artistic and social freedom afforded by the city's isolation from the rest of the country, which compounded his own sense of displacement as a gay Midwesterner. Not only did it nurture his literary career; it also seemed to offer the possibility of remaking the societal order. He and his peers "decided to separate out friendship, love, and sex" and obtain them from different sources: in the same years that he was having "industrial quantities of sex," with many, often anonymous partners, he cultivated lasting friends and mentors. AIDS doomed the grand experiment—White himself is H.I.V.-positive—but he retained a keen appreciation for the varieties of affection, which is gracefully displayed here. Lively sketches of James Merrill, Susan Sontag, Robert Mapplethorpe, and others are occasionally sharp as well as fond, but White's candor extends equally to his own doubts and failures.

Tinsel, *by Hank Stuever (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; $24).* In 2006, Stuever set out to characterize the experience of Christmas—its aesthetics, economics, and metaphysics—in an average Texas town. The resulting dissection of the holiday is cultural anthropology at its most exuberant. According to Stuever, fakery, not excess, is the signature of the modern American Christmas. More than twice as many synthetic Christmas trees are trimmed each year as real ones. Santa figurines at a Christmas bazaar purported to be handmade and local are found to have "Made in China" stickers on the back. Even the needy children and pensioners whom Stuever shops for through a Christmastime charity program turn out to be fabrications, complete with backstories, carefully imagined and designed to "reduce a generosity gap."

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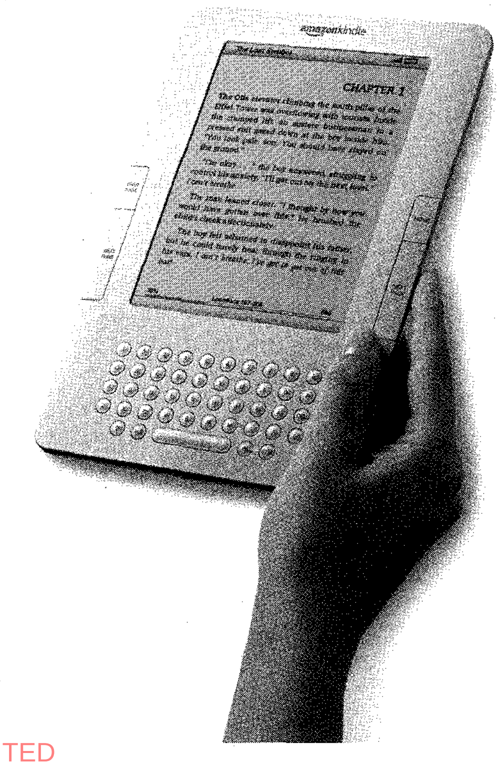


BOOKS

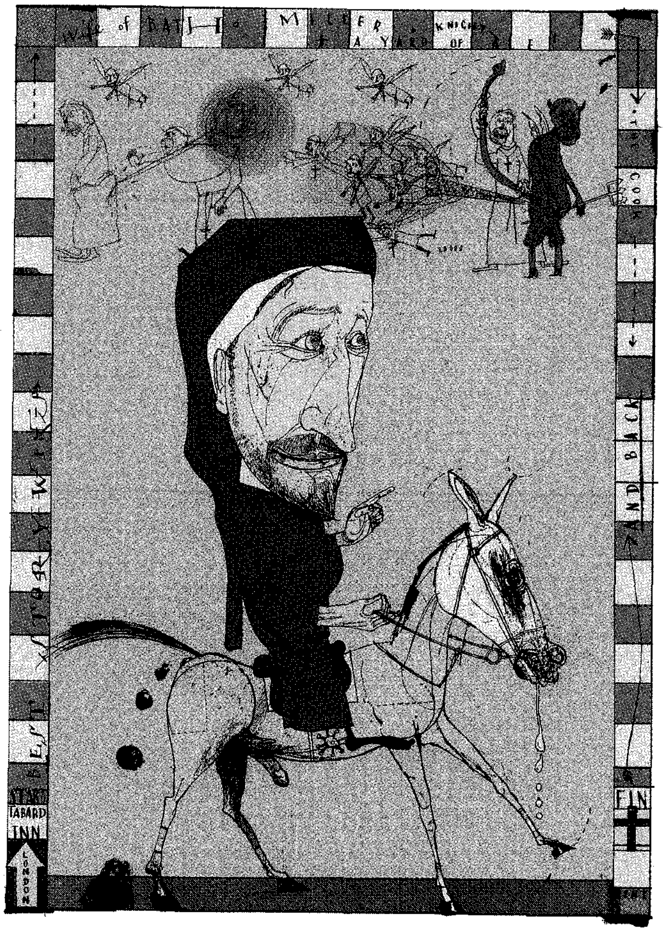
ALL ENGLAND

"The Canterbury Tales" retold.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

The received wisdom on Geoffrey Chaucer is that he was the freshest, clearest, and sweetest of the great English poets—which makes sense, since, living in the fourteenth century, he was also the first great English poet. "He is the poet of the dawn," Longfellow wrote. "As I read/I hear the crowing cock." Others have compared his writings to the tapestries that were being produced in Europe during his lifetime, with the quail and the rabbits scooting through the underbrush. Eventually, however, some critics wearied of this sun-kissed Chaucer. They felt that the formula invited condescension, and it did. Matthew Arnold said that Chaucer could not be ranked in the front line of English poets, because he lacked "high seriousness." Later commentators objected bitterly to this. If Chaucer was not serious, Lionel Trilling wrote, "then Mozart is not serious and Molière is not serious and seriousness becomes a matter of pince-nez glasses and a sepia print of the Parthenon over the bookshelf." That disagreement, like many another critical quarrel, ended up replacing one exaggeration with another—a new, dark-minded, always ironical Chaucer. Now came the Freudian interpretations. (In the words of one scholar, the opening lines of "The Canterbury Tales" present "the impregnating of a female March by a male April.") Later, we got the postmodern analyses—deconstructions, feminist readings, and the like. Meanwhile, the pendulum swung again. Many people got tired of the dark Chaucer and wanted the nice one back.

One of the qualities that make Chaucer so lovable is that he seems to love us. Very few writers have shown more fondness for the loud business of life. "The Canterbury Tales" is a collection of stories told by a group of twenty-nine people making a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. These pilgrims, most of them strangers to one another at the beginning of their journey, stop over at the Tabard Inn, in Southwark, where the Host proposes a contest: He will ride to Canterbury with them, and, to relieve the tedium of the journey, they will take turns telling stories. The pilgrim who produces the best story will be rewarded with a free dinner at the Tabard at the end of the trip.



Chaucer's poem began the glorious tradition of English realism.

This framework was shrewdly chosen. In the fourteenth century, pilgrimages drew from a wide spectrum of social classes, which Chaucer could gather into his poem. His characters also exemplify different types: the nun, the knight, the merchant, and so on. Further, they embody a range of vices and virtues, and gradations thereof. The poem is full of corrupt clergy, but some are corrupt this way, others that way. Chaucer was the first poet to give his characters both emblematic value (they stand for kinds of people) and, at the same time, concrete individuality (they *are* people). This was the beginning of the glorious tradition of English realism, of Defoe and Fielding and Dickens, not to speak of Shakespeare, but, even if Chaucer had not been the source of that bright stream, the variety and the high color of his pilgrims—the Miller with a hairy wart on his nose, the lisping Prioress, the gap-toothed Wife of Bath, in her red stockings—would take your breath away. In the words of John Dryden, "Here is God's plenty."

For the pilgrims' stories, Chaucer used the standard genres of the period: the romance, the sermon, the beast fable, the saint's life, the fabliau (bawdy tale), among others. The overarching design was also familiar. Some of the most popular works of the period were collections of tales: Ovid's "Metamorphoses," Boccaccio's "Decameron." Chaucer called on other conventions as well. "The Canterbury Tales" is crammed with the rhetorical devices—occupatio, metonymy, the citing of scores of authorities—that were a pillar of education in the late Middle Ages. As he himself wrote, "Out of old fields comes all the new corn." What he wanted was not to introduce new forms but to give new force and nuance to the accustomed forms. His famous Pardoner's Tale is cast as a sermon, but nothing in the surviving sermons of the Middle Ages approximates the thrilling spookiness of that tale's Death figure, tapping the

DAVID HUGHES

earth with his cane and begging, "Dear mother, let me in."

But Chaucer's great gift to us, the crown of his reputation, was the change that he made in the English language. The first innovation was that he used the language at all. Three centuries after the Norman conquest, when Chaucer was writing, French was still the language of literature in England. English, a ragbag of French, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon, had a much lower status. Chaucer, following the example of Dante, was one of the first poets in his country to dignify the vernacular by using it for a long, ambitious poem. He took from the French their eight-syllable poetic line, but converted it to a looser, more flexible ten-syllable line, which later became the basis of blank verse (Shakespeare, Milton) and of the heroic couplet (Dryden, Pope). He played with this new metrics, roughened it, fattened it. His more elegant commentators found his metrics primitive. Chaucer's poetry, Dryden said, had "the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune." Later scholars, defensive already about his supposed naïveté, countered (accurately) that people of Dryden's time could not hear Chaucer's lines properly, because they did not know how to pronounce Middle English, the fourteenth-century brand of the vernacular. But in fact a lot of Chaucer does have the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune.

What Chaucer made of this mixed language was just about everything. The poem is famously lively. First, there is the contrast between the stories, one long, gassy, and pious (notably, the Knight's Tale), another short and racy (the Miller's Tale, which immediately follows the Knight's). Then, there is the range of tone. At times, Chaucer can achieve a high, severe, Greco-Roman note; at other times he likes to talk about chickens copulating in a barnyard. Dramas transpire between the tales. The pilgrims quarrel over what kind of stories they want to hear. (They get tired of moral tales.) They insult one another's narrative skills. When the "I" of the poem—many critics call him the Chaucer-pilgrim—tries to contribute a tale, the Host tells him to stop: the story is too boring. And then, everything is concrete. In the Merchant's Tale, an old man, after his wedding night, sits up and croaks out a song: "The slack skin around his neck shook." Another man, in love with a married woman, Alison, calls her his cinnamon stick. Here, in a translation by Colin Wilcockson, is how the narrator of that tale, the Miller, describes Alison:

> This young wife was beautiful, and moreover her body was delicate and slender as any weasel. She wore a belt with silk strips, and, on her lower half, an apron as white as morning milk. . . . She had plucked her eyebrows so that they were fine, and they were arched and as black as a sloe. She was lovelier to look at than the early pear-tree, and softer than ram's wool. . . . Moreover, she could skip and play like some kid or calf following its mother. Her mouth was as sweet as ale-and-honey drink, or mead, or a heap of apples set out in hay.

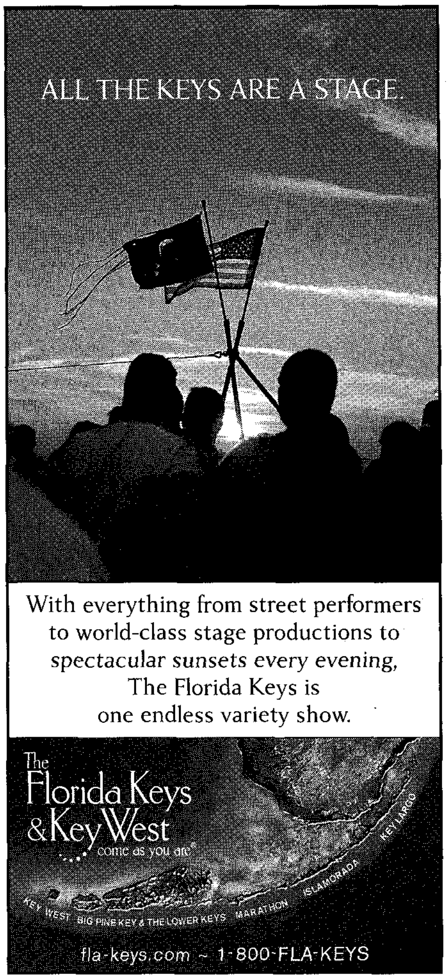
What is so witty here is that this woman is characterized, ravishingly, in terms of humble country matters—morning milk, the early pear tree, a heap of apples, a weasel—which is what the Miller, a man of the countryside, would think of as beautiful. Apples, weasels: this is not the pinnacle that English metaphor will achieve—it is not Queen Mab—but it is foremost among the reasons that people love Chaucer.

An endearing aspect of Chaucer's realism is what might be called his "serial description." Other writers, describing a character, sort that person's traits into categories, which they list in some logical order—for example, physical, psychological, and moral. Chaucer often does the opposite. He goes as his thoughts lead him. Here he is on the subject of the Cook:

> He knew how to roast, steam, boil and fry, make casseroles and bake a pie properly. But it seemed to me a great shame that he had a pustule on his shin. He made the finest fish or chicken stew.

The pustule on the Cook's shin would seem to have little to do with his pie-baking, or so we hope, but Chaucer is following cognitive logic, by which we see others in fragments. That man speaks well; he wears a peculiar hat; he is my mother's cousin; he gave me a nasty look.

Then, there is Chaucer's ribaldry. I will not describe the most celebrated example, the Miller's Tale (with the beauteous Alison), other than to say that it involves an act of involuntary cunnilingus—a rare event, surely—and that it can be found on pages 177-211 of Colin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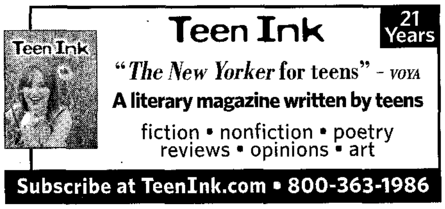
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Wilcockson's widely available Penguin Classics edition. This may be the dirtiest story ever told by a first-rank writer in English, Joyce not excepted. But even in small, sidelong passages Chaucer shows, in the words of Wilcockson, a bracing "factuality." Of an encounter between the song-croaking man's wife and her young lover, he reports, "Damian straightaway pulled up her skirt and in he thrust." This takes place in a tree.

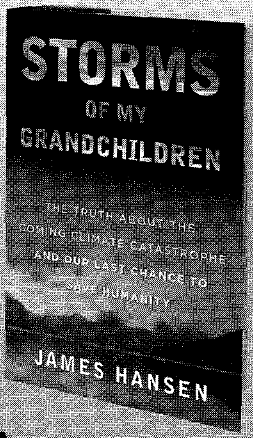
With scatology Chaucer is equally blunt. How he loves fart jokes! In the Summoner's Tale, a friar asks a man for alms. The man agrees but says that he has secreted his money beneath his buttocks. The friar should reach down there. He does so, and the man lets fly a fart so loud, Chaucer says, that "no cart horse could produce a fart of such a sound." Some scholars claim, however, that people in Chaucer's time were less self-conscious than we are about passing wind in front of others. The Miller, describing a parish clerk, says that among this man's noteworthy traits was a squeamishness about farting in public. How interesting!

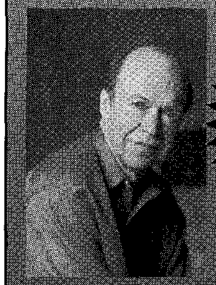
Whatever its source, Chaucer's lewdness is balanced by a tenderness that is almost always there in the poem, asserting itself gently. If, in story after story, old men are cuckolded by their young wives, this should mean that they are being made fools of, and that is the case, sort of. But Chaucer has a breadth of feeling that prevents anyone's being ridiculed for long. In the Miller's Tale, Alison's husband, a carpenter named John, is deceived by her lover, Nicholas, into thinking that the Flood is coming a second time and that, to escape it, he must spend the night in a bathtub lashed to the rafters of his barn. (This is to allow Nicholas and Alison to spend the night together in bed.) The sight of John swinging in the air in a bathtub is funny, but somewhat less funny in view of the fact that this man's first thought, when told of the coming deluge, was for his wife: "Alas, my wife! And she shall drown! Alas, my Alison!"

Chaucer extends his charity not just to fools but to scoundrels. In "The Canterbury Tales," there are at least two very troubling characters, the Prioress and the Pardoner. (A prioress is the second-in-command at a convent. A pardoner sold indulgences, or certificates forgiving sins, to the devout, so that they could get to Heaven faster.) Before telling his tale, the Pardoner spends more than a hundred lines describing proudly how he cheats poor people out of their money by getting them to buy false pardons. Then he produces his story (arguably the finest in the collection), whose subject is the destructive power of greed, the very sin he has just described as his favorite. That's not the end of it. After his sermon, he turns to the other pilgrims and urges them to buy his pardons. A number of critics have worked out explanations for this bewildering three-step, to make it seem logical, but the reading that appears to make the most sense is that Chaucer's presentation of the Pardoner is *not* logical—that the poet is portraying a kind of moral insanity, perhaps born of doing evil. It's like something out of Dostoyevsky.

As for the Prioress, we are told in the General Prologue, Chaucer's introduction to the tales, how genteel she is. She weeps if she sees a dead mouse; at meals, she never lets crumbs fall on her bosom. This is a little precious for a religious—we wonder about her right away—and, when it comes time for her story, she delivers what is surely the most offensive (to us) narrative in "The Canterbury Tales": a version of the so-called blood libel, in which Jews are portrayed as killing Christian children. The hero of the Prioress's Tale is a devout little boy who goes around singing the "Alma Redemptoris Mater," a chant that is part of the Christian liturgy. The local Jews, annoyed by him, hire an assassin, who slits the child's throat and throws him down a privy. Miraculously, the dead boy, lying in the filth, begins singing again. This alerts the authorities, and the Jews who killed him—indeed, all those who knew of the crime—are hanged.

Again, some critics have worked hard to establish whether or not the poet shared the Prioress's outlook. But, in view of the wit that Chaucer shows throughout his poem, it seems unlikely that he endorsed this tale. He may well have regarded hatred of Jews as just a superstition. As with Shakespeare, it is doubtful that he met many Jews—they were thrown out of England in 1290. Clearly, the image of the dead boy, recumbent in a cesspool, singing a





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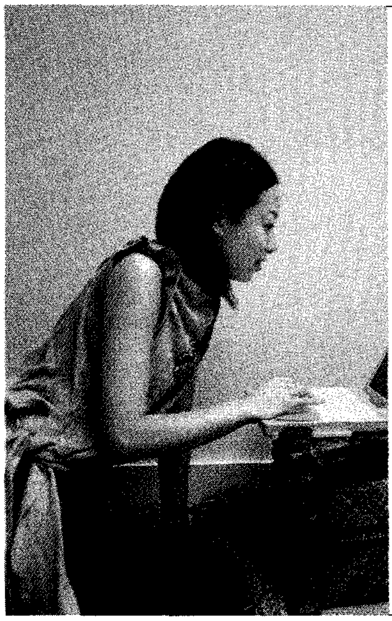
hymn to the Virgin, is not just cruel but funny—a species of black humor—and so is the Prioress, so dainty and delicate, who tells this vile story.

What made Chaucer so worldly-wise? One circumstance to consider is that, in his time, English vernacular poetry was brand new, and not yet linked with the suffering that would become its constant subject. Another factor, possibly, was his personality. This is a matter about which we know very little. Most of the information comes from legal and court records, some of them comically trivial. (In 1357, the Countess of Ulster ordered that he be given a pair of red-and-black breeches; in 1374, Edward III granted him a gallon of wine per day.) But here, briefly, is what the evidence tells us.

Chaucer, born around 1340, was from the high mercantile class—his father was a prosperous wine merchant—and he was given a good education. He grew up near Cheapside, a commercial section of London. By the age of seventeen, he had entered royal service. Under Richard II, he was, for many years, a court poet, composing traditional verses—roundelays, ballades—and reciting them for the amusement of the nobles. When he was in his thirties and forties, he also produced long poems—"The Parliament of Fowls," "The Legend of Good Women," "Troilus and Cressida"—that would probably have made him famous even if he had never written "The Canterbury Tales."

Composing poetry was not his only royal duty, however. He went on diplomatic missions to the Continent for Edward III and for Richard. He fought in France, and was briefly a prisoner of war. Most important were his commercial duties. In 1374, Edward made Chaucer the Controller of the Port of London, an important job that mostly involved the collection of taxes on exports. That job, and later royal appointments, required considerable business acumen—recording, auditing, supervising—and this is a matter that scholars have taken seriously in trying to mount a portrait of Chaucer's personality. Another is the length of his employment by England's monarchs. He eventually served three kings, the last of whom, Henry IV, had deposed his predecessor, Richard II—an event that divided the British people. That Chaucer's tenure at court survived this transition suggests that he was a valuable employee, and a diplomatic man.

Those facts were the basis on which the distinguished Chaucer scholar G. L. Kittredge, in 1915, dismissed the early claims about Chaucer's naïveté. As he wrote, "a naïf Collector of Customs would be a paradoxical monster." Chaucer's involvement with the practical world is also, in large part, the underpinning of the most recent biography, "Chaucer" (2004), by the English man of letters Peter Ackroyd. Ackroyd's beloved subject is London, and this book is another hymn to that city. Chaucer lived in the capital for most of his life, on a busy thoroughfare. When he woke up in the morning, the biography tells us, he could see and hear from his window the merchants arriving from the farms outside London, and the hawkers advertising their wares: "Twelve herrings for a penny! Hot pies!" (This sounds a little like the opening of "Oliver!," but it is probably true.) In Ackroyd's view, such clamor inspired in Chaucer his love of concreteness and variety. It also, he implies, helped to create in the poet a certain psychological idiosyncrasy: Chaucer's familiarity with urban dust and bustle, together with the pragmatism required by his jobs, encouraged in him a modesty rare in artists. He knew that he wasn't the only thing in the world. Ackroyd bolsters this argument by reminding us that much of Chaucer's output consisted of translations from Latin and French literature, and that many of the stories in "The Canterbury Tales" are framed in the standard genres of the period. Chaucer, he says, could not bear to put himself forward. To support his theory further, Ackroyd cites Chaucer's portrayal of himself in "The Canterbury Tales," as a shy, chubby, bookish man, who keeps his eyes lowered as he rides. His tale-telling is interrupted not once but twice by the Host. In that man's words, Chau-



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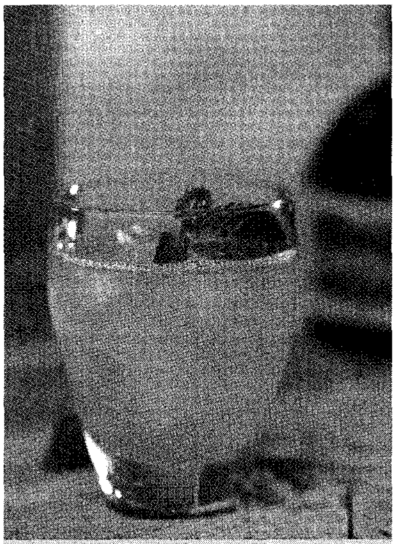

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cer's metrics is "not worth a turd." This is unquestionably a joke; Chaucer's mastery of metrics was unparalleled in England in his time, as he knew. His self-portrait in "The Canterbury Tales" is an act of irony. But Ackroyd suspects that it may also have been, in some measure, a true confession. He sees Chaucer as a great poet, but he also regards him as neurotically self-effacing, a writer whose "comic genius may have been in part inspired by an unhappy and obsessive temperament." This evaluation poses a problem for literary history, because Ackroyd is the most recent translator of "The Canterbury Tales."

Ackroyd's sense of Chaucer's recessiveness may have prodded him to boldness in his own version. "The Canterbury Tales: A Retelling by Peter Ackroyd" (Viking; $35) is a very free translation, as its subtitle tells us. Ackroyd's goal, he says in his note on the text, was to make Chaucer's poem modern, "releasing an older work into the contemporary world." He does this, first, by rendering the poem in prose. If he had had to supply rhyme and meter, this would have greatly limited his word choices and thus his power to update the poem.

The translation is prosey in another sense: if Chaucer is often indelicate, Ackroyd is downright obscene. When Chaucer has the Wife of Bath saying, in defense of love, "For what purpose was a body made?," Ackroyd translates, "Cunts are not made for nothing, are they?" She also cites King Solomon, with his many wives. "On his wedding nights," she says (in Chaucer's original), "he had many a merry bout with each of them, so lively a man was he." Ackroyd translates, "What about all those wedding nights? I bet that he did you-know-what as hard as a hammer with a nail. I bet he gave them a right pounding." When, in the Miller's Tale, Alison says to her swain, "Love me at once or I will die," Ackroyd gives us "Fuck me or I am finished." Middle English had a word for "fuck," "swyve," and Chaucer didn't mind using it. But I would guess that Ackroyd uses it twice as often. Everything is fuck this and fuck that.

Then, there is the sheer flatness of the translation. Matters that Chaucer trusted us to figure out Ackroyd feels he must explain. Some explanations are welcome. Since there are no footnotes in this edition, we should thank Ackroyd for telling us, within the text, what a summoner is, and a reeve. But most of the time his elucidations are superfluous and intrusive. Here are the opening lines of Chaucer's poem, with an interlinear translation (1948) by Vincent F. Hopper. To my knowledge, Hopper's rendering is as close, as word for word, as any translation of "The Canterbury Tales":

> When that Aprille with his shoures sote
> *When April with his showers sweet*
>
> The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
> *The drought of March has pierced to the root,*
>
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
> *And bathed every vein in such liquor,*
>
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
> *From whose virtue is engendered the flower;*
>
> Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
> *When Zephyr too with his sweet breath*
>
> Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
> *Has quickened, in every grove and field,*
>
> The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
> *The tender sproutings; and the young sun*
>
> Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
> *Has in the Ram his half course run,*
>
> And smale fowles maken melodye,
> *And small birds make melody,*
>
> That slepen al the night with open yë
> *That sleep all night with open eye . . .*
>
> Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
> *Then people long to go on pilgrimages.*

Ackroyd's translation is as follows:

> When the soft sweet showers of April reach the roots of all things, refreshing the parched earth, nourishing every sapling and every seedling, then humankind rises up in joy and expectation. The west wind blows away the stench of the city, and the crops flourish in the fields beyond the walls. After the waste of winter it is delightful to hear birdsong once more in the streets. The trees themselves are bathed in song. It is a time of renewal, of general restoration. The sun has passed midway through the sign of the Ram, a good time for the sinews and the heart. This is the best season of the year for travellers. That is why good folk then long to go on pilgrimage.

There are a few felicities here (the

sapling and seedling), but there is also a factual error—Chaucer is talking about the country, not the city—and a comprehensive problem of tone. Gone is the tender eroticism: the "pierced" and "bathed" and "engendered" and "sweet breath." Gone are the small birds sleeping with their eyes open, as if ready to go into action. In place of that piquancy, Ackroyd offers us generalizations. In spring, "humankind rises up in joy and expectation"; "this is the best season of the year for travellers"; "it is a time of renewal, of general restoration." That's what Chaucer said, but with rain and birds, not with banalities. If Ackroyd thought that Chaucer was this dull, why did he bother to translate him?

Readers coming to "The Canterbury Tales" for the first time should avoid this version, and instead do one of two things. The better is to buy Vincent Hopper's interlinear translation, quoted above. This is unashamedly a pony. It places the new word directly under the original word—a device that makes the syntax feel old-fashioned but that will also quickly teach *you* Middle English, which is not hard. (See the opening lines of the Prologue, above. You can understand them, or come close. It's not unlike "If you cn rd this, you cn gt a gd job.") There is a more recent version, similar to Hopper's: Larry Benson's "Reading Chaucer: An Interlinear Translation of Selections in the Norton Anthology of English Literature." Though it is good, I like it less than Hopper's, simply because it inserts no line spaces around the paired lines:

> And smale fowles maken melodye,
> *And small fowls make melody,*
> That slepen al the night with open yë—
> . . .

Without the separation, the lines are harder to read.

For people who steadfastly refuse to confront the Middle English, the best recent translations are those of Colin Wilcockson and Nevill Coghill (both Penguin Classics) and David Wright (Oxford World's Classics). Don't worry that Wilcockson's doesn't include all the tales. Truth to tell, some of them are boring. And, in their place, on the left-hand page, Wilcockson gives us Chaucer's text, so that we might accidentally learn some Middle English after all.

Chaucer worked on "The Canterbury Tales" for many years, often after a full day at his other jobs. He would return home and write or read until he fell into his bed—"dumb as any stone," in his words. When he died, the poem was unfinished. He had projected more than a hundred stories; he completed just over twenty. The sequencing was also unclear. The order of the tales in today's versions was established by nineteenth-century editors.

Chaucer was famous in his lifetime, and more so after his death. William Caxton, the first printer of books in English, published a "Canterbury Tales" in 1476. Edmund Spenser, Chaucer's first great successor, called him "the well of English undefiled." Shakespeare based his "Troilus and Cressida" and "Two Noble Kinsmen" (written with John Fletcher) on Chaucer's poetry. To Dryden, Chaucer was the primary source not just of English literature but of the English character, "the various manners and Humors . . . of the whole English nation." Ackroyd believes the same: that certain fundamental English traits—geniality, irony, a loathing of pretension—have their origins in Chaucer. He is "the face of Albion," Ackroyd writes. This is an exalted compliment, but Harold Bloom has said much the same about Shakespeare—that Western people learned to be who they are from his work.

Chaucer died in 1400, or so the inscription on his tomb says. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in honor of his royal service, not his poems. But, two centuries later, Spenser was buried near him, and it was then decided to devote a special section of the Abbey to writers. So Chaucer, in a way, founded Poets' Corner. This is fitting. He brought wit and beauty to English poetry and thereby gave his successors not just a model but pride and confidence in their young literary language. ♦

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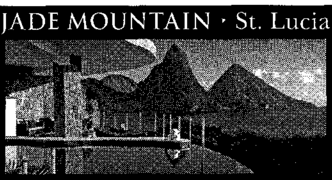

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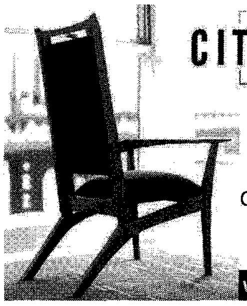

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THE ART WORLD

MAN OF THE WORLD

A Gabriel Orozco retrospective.

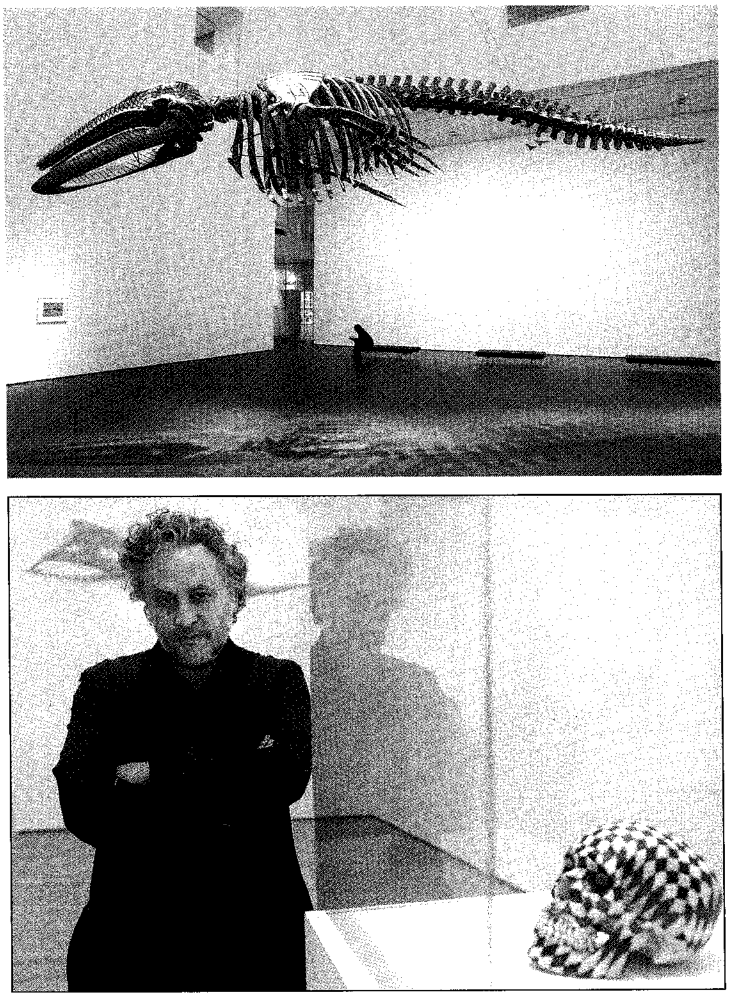
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

If you've missed out on the avant-gardish art of the past couple of decades—some people make a point of doing so—you now have a one-stop chance to catch up on the good parts. They are in a Gabriel Orozco retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art. The Mexican sculptor and conceptualist, forty-seven years old, is easily the best artist to have emerged on the era's global biennial circuit—a milieu whose chaotic demands for theatrical pizzazz and political virtue have wrecked innumerable promising talents. (Scant other exceptions include the tough-minded Danish-Icelandic installation-maker Olafur Eliasson.) The MOMA show confirms that Orozco is, in fact, the one artist of his ilk and time who stands up to really rigorous scrutiny—incidentally rejuvenating art history as a going concern—and justifies the effort by being delightful. His works aren't invariably beautiful, but they all bespeak beauty as an operating principle: the catch in consciousness when mind and body merge in a state of praise for existence, just as it is.

The occasion needn't be a big deal: common objects (an empty shoe box on the floor greets visitors to the show) presented not as art but, pointedly, in place of art (breaking the spell of the Duchampian readymade); a nineteen-sixties Citroën DS, an icon of French industrial chic, trisected lengthwise and reassembled with the middle third left out (arty design reduced to art, purely); photographs of ephemeral interventions in the world (ripples from pebbles thrown onto a flooded flat roof, cans of cat food perched on watermelons in a supermarket, a fog of breath on the polished top of a piano); and improvisatory sculptures in materials (wood, clay, plaster, polyurethane foam, concrete, sea shells, tree roots, moss) that feel newly discovered. There is no Orozco style, unless it's his penchant for found, drawn, and sculpted circles and spheres. He evinces a blind spot for painting, with inert geometric canvases, but never a failure of nerve. Consider the whale ("Mobile Matrix"), a commission for a new library in Mexico City: the skeleton of a thirty-five-foot leviathan marked in graphite with segments of overlapping circles, now suspended majestically, and magically, in MOMA's atrium. The marks are like a set of thoughts about something that happens to be, right there with you, a whale.

Orozco entered the dauntingly trackless field of contemporary art with momentum from an intensively cultivated childhood. He was born in 1962, in Jalapa, Veracruz. His father was a mural painter and an art professor, his mother a classical pianist. They were Communists whose anti-Americanism extended to a ban on the speaking of English in their home. Orozco received strict traditional training at the National School of Plastic Arts, graduating in 1984. An interest in photography deepened in 1985, after the earthquake in Mexico City, when, on long walks through devastated neighborhoods, he took pictures of debris. In 1986, frustrated by the insular nationalism of the local art scene, he moved to Madrid and travelled in Europe. The art and the ideas of Robert Smithson, Gordon Matta-Clark, Piero Manzoni, and John Cage inspired him. He began to find or to concoct, and then to photograph, artlike appearances of things in city streets. Upon his return to Mexico City, in 1987, Orozco catalyzed a group of young artists, who met regularly to workshop a wide range of free-form sculptural ideas. At a brick factory, in 1991, he played with a lump of clay, compressing it between his hands into what emerged as a finger-marked, abstracted human heart. Two photographs of the act, paired as "My Hands Are My Heart," became famous as a hip talisman of *mexicanidad* in an international art world that was smitten, at the time, with multiculturalism. Orozco stoutly denied wanting to represent (in any sense) Mexico. But the association boosted his rapid rise in festivalist exhibitions.

Orozco maintains home bases in Mexico City, New York, and Paris. They aren't studios in the usual sense. He recoils from the trappings of professional artistry, preferring kitchen tables to customized workbenches. A spirit of domestic enterprise informs the assortment of experimental, incomplete, and found objects arranged on a vast table in the show. Some of his paintings are made in a Paris studio, where a friend directs the work according to instructions received from Orozco by online chat. Crisp, diagrammatic layouts of exfoliating circles and arcs, on white grounds, the paintings have few fans among critics. I sure don't like them, although Orozco's patient remark in their defense gives me pause: "People forget that I want to disappoint." That strategy, targeting "the expectations of the one who waits to be amazed," has worked well for him. I vividly remember being outraged in the proverbial manner of a philistine exposed to modern art when, for his first solo gallery show in New York, in 1994, Orozco displayed, on the walls of the main room at Marian Goodman, nothing but four Dannon yogurt lids. I recovered, by and by, to take the artist's point, which amounted to disappointment as aesthetic therapy. The transparent, blue-rimmed, date-stamped, price-labelled little items were—and are, at MOMA—rather lovely, when contemplated without prejudice. Are they art? No. They are Dannon yogurt lids. The art part is a triggered awareness that the world teems with vernacular loveliness. If you overlook that, it's sad for you. I do wonder if such wholesomely deflationary logic can avail with paintings, which are objects of a historically replete, stubbornly sensitive character. Painting materializes dreaming, which Orozco abjures; his art is ineluctably wide-awake. Viewers with a mathematical turn of mind, which I lack, may enjoy his impositions on the medium. The problem is moot in a big second-floor space at MOMA, lined with hundreds of digitally printed permutations of a particular design in red, white, blue, and gold. The room precipitates a visual meltdown of practically Byzantine glory. I wouldn't mind adding furniture and moving in.


Orozco at MOMA with "Black Kites" (1997) and, top, "Mobile Matrix" (2006). Photographs by Gus Powell.

Much of the show, organized by the museum's chief curator of painting and sculpture, Ann Temkin, amounts to a walk-in album of Orozco's greatest hits: a big ball of plasticine that he rolled through the streets of New York, accumulating velvety filth ("Yielding Stone"); a double-sized chessboard occupied only by knights ("Horses Running Endlessly"); a human skull checkered with graphite ("Black Kites"); a devilishly simple, riotously erotic combination of three plastic-foam balls, a piece of steel mesh, and a string ("Seed"); a Japanese-paper scroll collaged with every number in the Monterrey phone book ("Dial Tone"); and a page of the same on which all the first names that are not his wife's have been erased ("Maria, Maria, Maria").

But the impression of a career given to playful, one-off tours de force misleads. All Orozco's works are deeply informed by historical precedent—a feature that thrills scholars of contemporary art, who have been bereft of viable heroes since the heyday of critical theory, in the nineteen-eighties, spawned waves of eagerly abstruse artists who would prove as disheartening to their mentors as to most everybody else. (The M.I.T. Press has just issued "Gabriel Orozco," a book of formidable essays and interviews from the academic journal *October*.) A cardinal point is Orozco's way of relating to post-minimalism, notably the achievements of Bruce Nauman and Eva Hesse, as a cogent, fertile tradition, rather than—as it has often seemed for the past forty years—a terminal breakdown of art's formal integrity, relevance to life as it is lived, and civilized appeal. Orozco thereby realigns the present with new thoughts about still earlier canonical artists, including Duchamp, Brancusi, Mondrian, and the Russian Constructivists. He revisits and slyly rethinks Surrealism, too, as with the uprooted trunk of a Beaucarnea (or ponytail palm) tree, inset with myriad glass eyes of different sizes ("Eyes under Elephant Foot"). You needn't know much about any of this to enjoy what Orozco does, but the show may return you to MOMA's permanent collection with freshly curious attention. Pleasure is the only trusty teacher and guarantor of seriousness in art. Why is that so easy to forget? ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

FREE AND UNEASY

"Nine," "The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus," "The Young Victoria," "A Single Man."

BY ANTHONY LANE

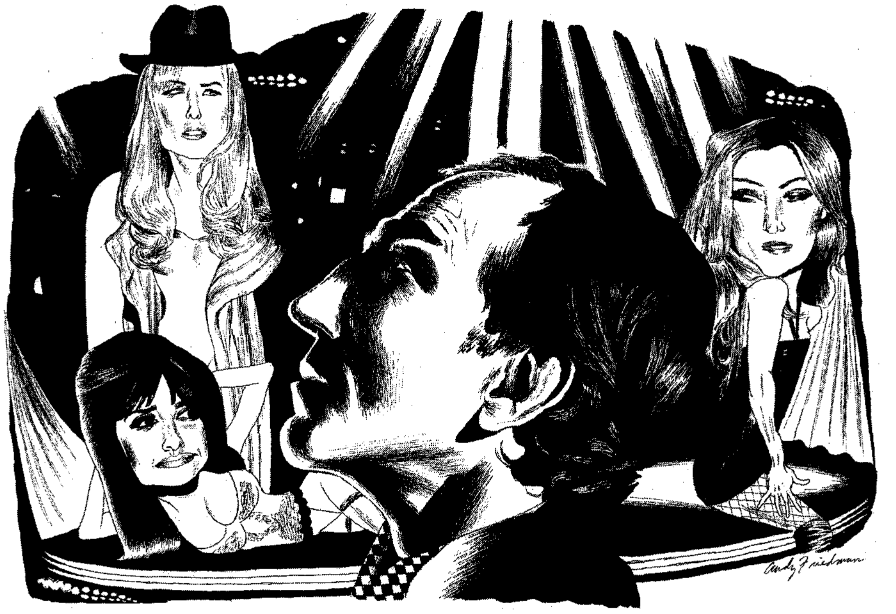
The beginning of "Nine" feels like an end. The first words we hear are "You kill your film," uttered at a press conference by an Italian movie director named Guido Contini (Daniel Day-Lewis). We then find him at the Cinecittà film studios, in Rome, on an echoing soundstage, which starts to fill, as if by magic, with all the women he has known, adored, and worked with. They range from his mother (Sophia Loren) to his tigerish mistress (Penélope Cruz), his main muse (Nicole Kidman), and his long-suffering wife, Luisa (Marion Cotillard). Also present are his costume designer and confidante (Judi Dench), a reporter from American *Vogue* (Kate Hudson), and, from the shifting sands of his childhood, a witchy hooker by the name of Saraghina (Fergie). Together they weave around Guido, chanting "La-la-la," like a chorus without a song sheet.

You wonder where the lyrics went, but, as the rest of "Nine" makes clear, you're not missing much. Rob Marshall's film is based on the stage production of the same name, and I can't say that I am racked with regret at having skipped it. There are big numbers aplenty—all the actresses get one apiece, apart from Cotillard, who gets two—and most of them are belted out with growls and gusto (Fergie being the belter-in-chief), but I woke up the next morning, as I did after Marshall's previous choice of musical, "Chicago," without a single tune or phrase still tolling in my head. "My husband spins fantasies, he lives them, then gives them to you," Luisa sings, and her words might as well be spoken. You long for the ghost of Lorenz Hart to be unleashed on the whole affair, with a hard blue pencil and a head full of rhymes.

To be fair, the theatrical project was a challenge in the first place, having taken its cue from "8½," Fellini's masterpiece of 1963. This means that "Nine" is a film of a musical of a film—which was itself the film of a life, if you happen to believe that Guido (Marcello Mastroianni) was the harassed alter ego of Fellini himself. The story was that there was no story; Guido could not get his latest film started, or even written, and that remains the case in "Nine." One is forced to ask: who wants to make, or watch, a major Hollywood musical about mental block? "Singin' in the Rain" was also about obstacles in moviemaking, but it found irrepressible joy in seeing them surmounted; each song pushed events along, whereas the songs in "Nine" merely hold them up. A woman is introduced, the action is paused, and she gives us the melodious lowdown on her circumstances. Cruz, for instance, begins with the purring line "Who's not wearing any clothes? I'm not," though she is in fact wearing about an acre of lingerie, and sliding down a long pink slope: a lubricious tribute to "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," from "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," although Cruz is hellbent on highlighting her rear, whereas Marilyn Monroe was too busy stuffing her tongue in her cheek.

The wisest figure by far is Judi Dench, and it's a pity that she is saddled with the most pointless song—a riff on the Folies-Bergère. Wrong country, surely, but then the movie's grip on Italy feels tenuous at best. There are luscious locations, and everyone will covet Guido's lithe little Alfa Romeo in powder blue, but there is no getting around the ungainly fact that here is a bunch of non-Italian performers speaking like-a theess. (The script is by Michael Tolkin and the late Anthony Minghella, whose 1999 film, "The Talented Mr. Ripley," about foreigners dying to be sucked into Italy's warmth, and only half succeeding, was a far more honest approach to cultural fusion. Just think what Minghella might have wrought at the helm of "Nine.") Apart from the odd *pronto* and *bene*, the ban on Italian is absolute, without one subtitle. Could this be because the filmmakers are scared that "Nine" will be mistaken for an art-house picture? If so, their fear is well grounded, because "8½" remains the most gorgeous item of festive modernism, with its portrait of the artist ensnared by the goddesses of memory and desire. The entire theme of Marshall's film is set by and surpassed by Fellini's opening scene—wordless and breathy, with a trapped Mastroianni pounding on the windows of his hearse-black, gridlocked car.

To follow in the footsteps of Mastroianni is no enviable task, and Daniel Day-Lewis, adroit as ever, approaches it by changing the steps. Where his



Penélope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Daniel Day-Lewis, and Kate Hudson in "Nine."

ANDY FRIEDMAN

predecessor lounged and strolled, or dipped into a clownish stagger, we find Day-Lewis, leaner in physique, forever on the fast and wolfish prowl—hands in pockets, shoulders forward, not pushing his sunglasses cutely up and down his nose, as Mastroianni did, but keeping them on full beam, like the Devil's headlights. He belongs, however, in a more focussed movie; this one feels too sluggish for his predations, although we do get a loyal reproduction of the scene, from "8½," in which Guido watches footage of his latest screen tests, with Luisa sitting nearby. She was once his leading lady, and Marshall has supplied (as Fellini did not) a flashback to her own test, years before, with Guido unpinning her hair in front of the camera. Now he does exactly the same to a grateful ingénue, and there is no forgetting the look in Cotillard's eyes, and their tears of simmering wrath. "To create is to forgive yourself in public," she says, and the line is like a switchblade. She has seen, as Fellini saw all too clearly, and as "Nine" shows only in flickers, that the Guidos of this world are drawn toward a helpless and horrifying deal: love for art's sake. The beast is not made human by his beauties, whether they number eight, nine, or hundreds; he just becomes more of a beast.

The new Terry Gilliam film, "The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus," has one of those roll-up, roll-up titles that appeal to Gilliam, who is not so much a movie director as a carnival barker with a bent for motion pictures. The last example was "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen," and some of its tropes return here: the team of travelling players, and the elderly fabulist who tries to dictate the proceedings. In this case, our aging hero, Dr. Parnassus (Christopher Plummer), is perched inside a mobile theatre, of antiquated design, which is trundled through modern London; part of the movie's charm is its brazen anachronism—a sense that the past can seep through time and burst into the here and now. (And the now is pretty wretched: rusting wastelands beside the Thames.)

Also in attendance are Tom Waits, as a smiling Beelzebub in a bowler hat; a dwarf, sadly compulsory in any work that flirts with the surreal; and, as Parnassus's daughter, the British model Lily Cole, whose unearthly heart of a face is like a special effect. Above all, we get four types of Tony, the gadabout who consorts with Parnassus's troupe. He is played by Johnny Depp, Colin Farrell, Jude Law, and Heath Ledger, the first three deputizing for the last, who died before the film's completion. It should not be mistaken for his finest hour; we see his larking, but not the undertow of frailty that tugged at "Brokeback Mountain," and his principal duty here, like everyone else's, is to go with the flow of phantasmagoria.

Thus, people are invited onto the Doctor's stage and sent through a rickety mirror, into a world where anything goes—a candy-colored landscape out of "Mary Poppins," an oily river that curls up into a snake's head, you name it. Are these embodiments of each person's fancy, or did Parnassus himself cook them up? I have no idea, any more than I can decide whether C.G.I. was the best or the worst thing that could have happened to Terry Gilliam. His gifts of invention were already so fecund, and so prolix, that this newfound ability to construct *anything* that drifts into his mind's eye—as opposed to the ramshackle, hand-drawn delight of his earlier animation—spells both enchantment and chaos. He can follow any train of thought, so he does, and it's no surprise when the trains run out of steam.

No such mania infects "The Young Victoria," Jean-Marc Vallée's account of the monarch's early years, which veers in the other direction. From the start, it feels handsome, steady, and stuck; the ties that bind the historical bio-pic are no looser than those which constrain a royal personage, and the frustration to which Victoria would later admit ("I had led a very unhappy life as a child—had no scope for my very violent feelings of affection") is legible in the face of Emily Blunt, who takes the title role. She is attended by a host of British actors—Paul Bettany, though too young, makes a winning and cynical Lord Melbourne, and Jim Broadbent, resembling a Gillray cartoon, detonates the stolid tale with a loud, and well-attested, explosion of rage at a banquet—but the movie, like the age that it depicts, stands or falls on the woman at its core. Blunt strikes me as the real deal:

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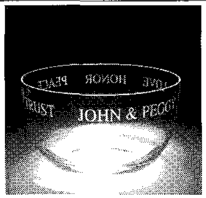

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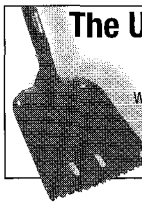

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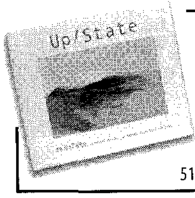

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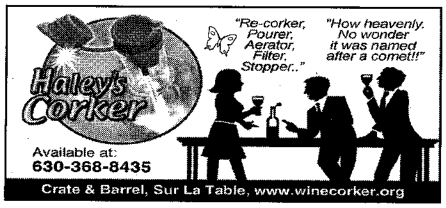
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languid but biting, like Jeanne Moreau, yet able to command a scene while somehow appearing to shift to one side (as Moreau would never do) and observe with a skeptic's smile. The little puff of relief that Victoria gives after addressing the Privy Council on the morning of her accession is, despite her duties, the exhalation of a free spirit, and one prays that films more liberating than this, and more likely to feed Blunt's appetites, will come her way.

The Colin Firth of "A Single Man," likewise, rises above the atmosphere that encircles him. He plays George, who teaches literature at a college in Los Angeles, in 1962, while mourning the loss of his lover, Jim (Matthew Goode), in a car accident. When George walks through the snow toward the crash site, not only are his pants perfectly creased but even the corpse preserves a certain je ne sais quoi. True, this is a dream sequence, but then the whole movie, with its glazed and polished air, could be a dream. We know, for instance, how English professors dress: some trim-suited and clerical, others avuncular in tweed, many too deep in Dryden to be bothered with their outward crust, and one or two no better than compost heaps. Not this lot. They look as spry and as spotless as an advertising spread in *L'Uomo Vogue*. Who's in charge here, for heaven's sake—a fashion designer?

Well, yes, for "A Single Man" is the first feature to be directed by Tom Ford. The hero of the story, adapted from the novel by Christopher Isherwood, explains himself in voice-overs: "Just get through the goddamned day: bit melodramatic, perhaps, but then again, my heart has been broken. Feel as if I'm drowning, sinking, can't breathe," he says. Such wordiness seems unjust to Firth, who is perfectly capable of showing any congestion of spirit by body language alone. The film is slowed by its own beauty, but it is salvaged by two majestic scenes. In one, George learns of Jim's death in a phone call from a relative, during which his voice (this being 1962) must betray nothing, leaving his face (on which Ford is smart enough to keep the camera) to do all the work; in another, George goes around for a long evening with his friend Charley (Julianne Moore), who likes to start boozing as she puts on *her* face in the morning. Two characters trying and failing to drown their hopes and regrets, and two strong actors refusing to be tight-laced by a director's exercise in style: here is a mood piece looking for a fight. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/GO/LANE2009
Anthony Lane's top films of the year.

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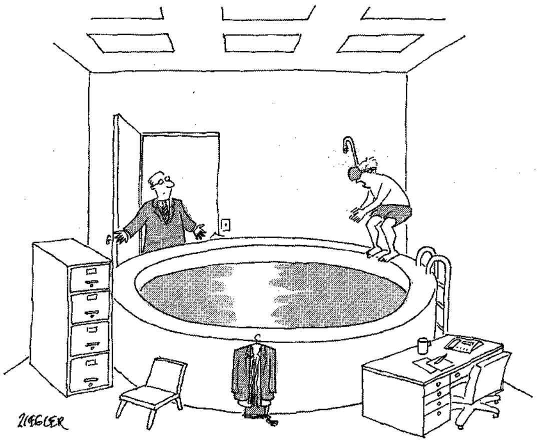
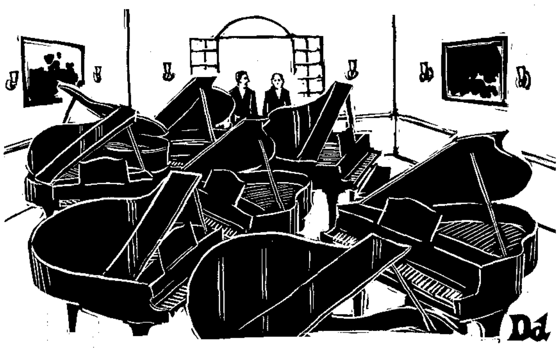
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, December 27th. The finalists in the December 7th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the January 11th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the U.S. or Canada (except Quebec) age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Don't worry, I ate lunch more than an hour ago."
Michael Cianfrani, San Francisco, Calif.



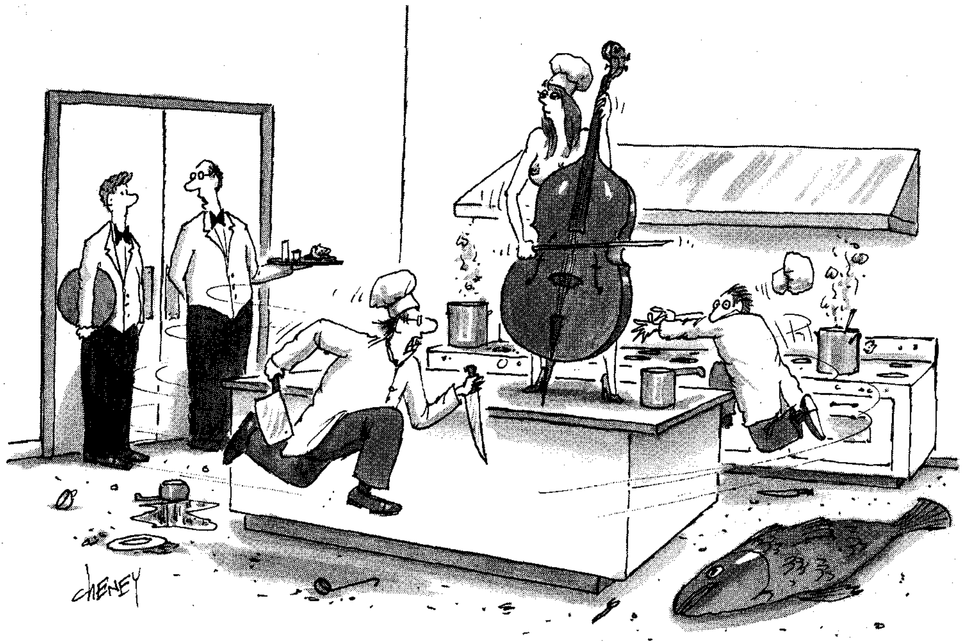
THE FINALISTS

"Well, where did you think baby grands came from?"
Sara Willis, Blue Hill, Me.

"We buy everything in bulk."
William D. Thomas, Silver Spring, Md.

"I don't play. I just really hate elephants."
Rich Powell, Indianapolis, Ind.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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